SLUMBER PARTY

NO BOYS ALLOWED!

don't forget Oct.3!!
SLAMDUNK
BERSERK
UTENA
UTENA
Hidden Leaf
FACE MASK
PROGRESS
23%
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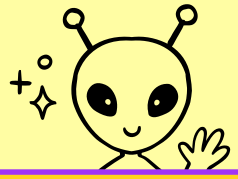
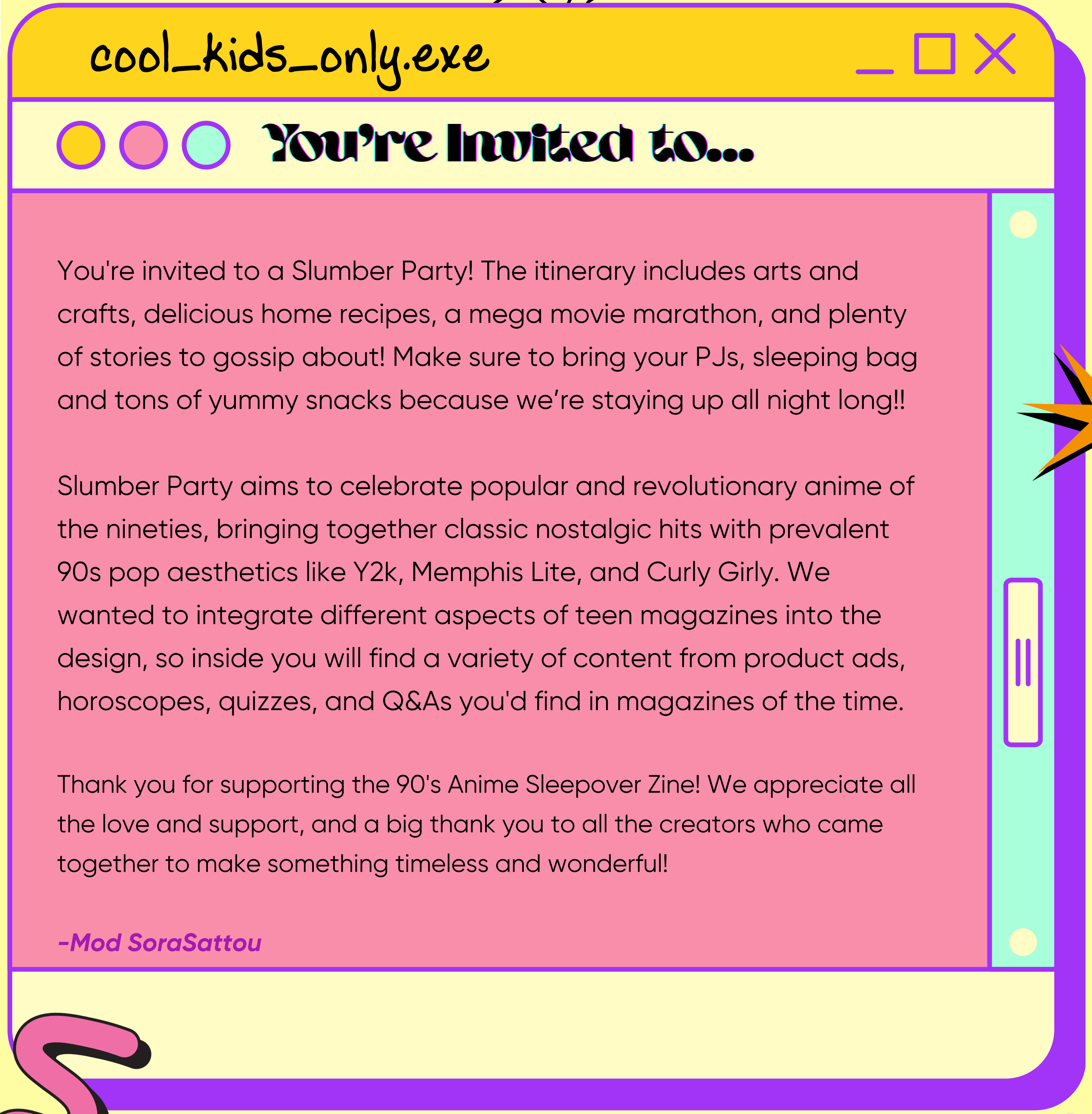
PRINCESS MONONOKE
GHOST IN THE SHELL

SLUMBER PARTY

Cool Kids Only!

foreword

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You're Invited to...

You're invited to a Slumber Party! The itinerary includes arts and crafts, delicious home recipes, a mega movie marathon, and plenty of stories to gossip about! Make sure to bring your PJs, sleeping bag and tons of yummy snacks because we're staying up all night long!!

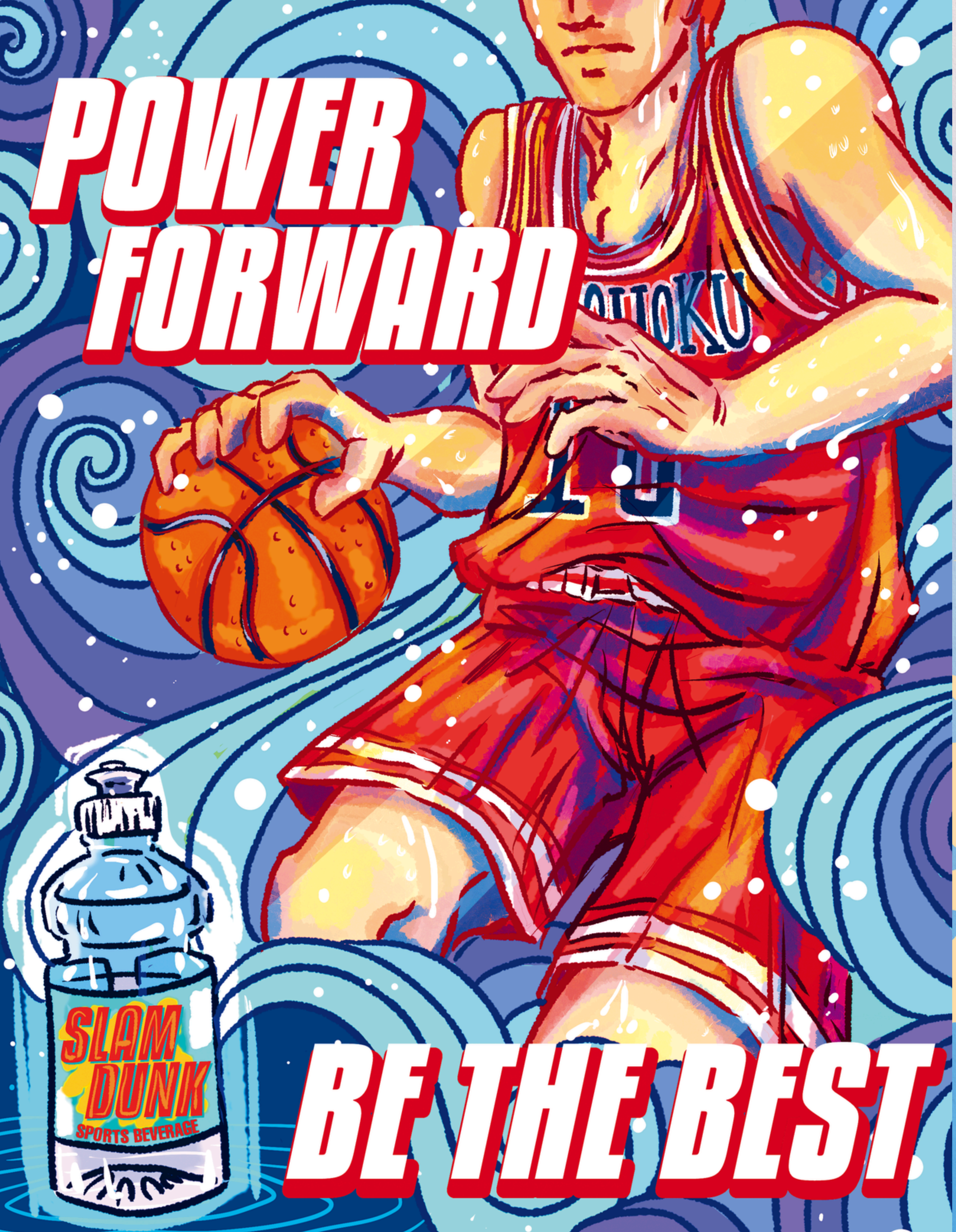
Slumber Party aims to celebrate popular and revolutionary anime of the nineties, bringing together classic nostalgic hits with prevalent 90s pop aesthetics like Y2k, Memphis Lite, and Curly Girly. We wanted to integrate different aspects of teen magazines into the design, so inside you will find a variety of content from product ads, horoscopes, quizzes, and Q&As you'd find in magazines of the time.

Thank you for supporting the 90's Anime Sleepover Zine! We appreciate all the love and support, and a big thank you to all the creators who came together to make something timeless and wonderful!

-Mod SoraSattou

contents

[AD] pg 6-7
Sleepover Guide pg 8-13
Recipes pg 14
Top 50 pg 16-19
Sleepover Q&A pg 20-29
Comic pg 30-33
Sleepover Stories pt1 pg 34-81
Recipes pg 82-89
Sleepover Stories pt2 pg 92-123
[AD] pg 102
Quiz pg 124-125
Sleepover Activities pg 126-127
Gettin' Crafty pg 128-137
Sleepover Stories pt3 pg 138-169
[AD] pg 145
Recipes pg 178-179
Horoscopes pg 180-181
Merch pg 182-187
Contributors pg 188-196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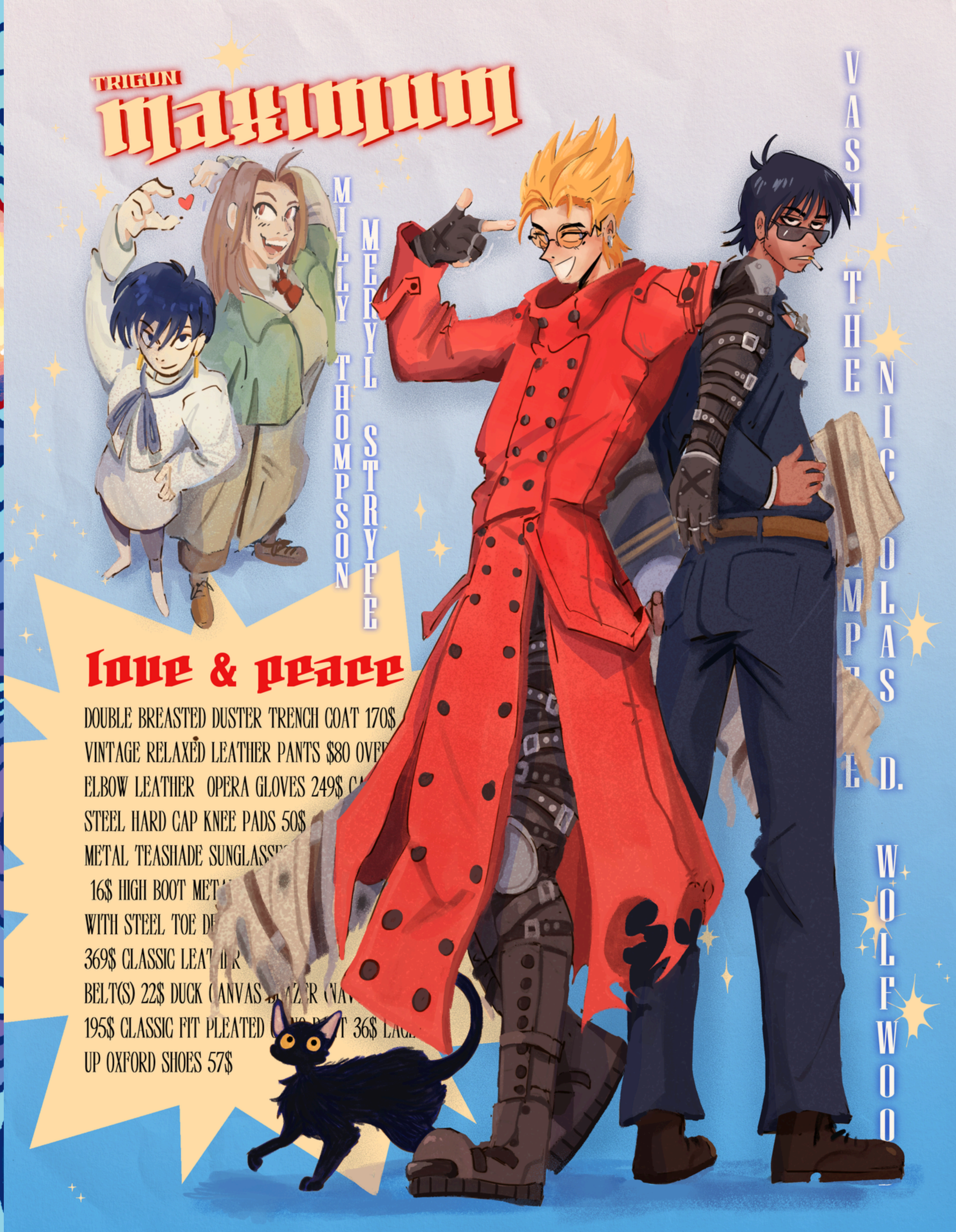
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fallsintograce

guide

Mako's Guide to the Perfect Sleepover

sailor moon

kino makoto

Hello, everyone! Kino Makoto, but you can call me Mako, here to give you all the dos and don'ts, ins and outs, ups and downs of having your sleepover. My friends and I have held many of them, and they're always a blast! However, we've had a few of them that didn't turn out the way we wanted. Either we didn't get the right food, we rented the wrong movie, or it rained too much for us to go outside.

Before I go into some tips, let me tell of some of my worst sleepovers. One sleepover, we ordered pizza and it didn't come in thirty minutes or less so we had to get food from a restaurant next door. That food was subpar, and to make matters worse, the pizza came and it had the wrong toppings plus it was cold. At another sleepover, I couldn't get the movie that we wanted so I picked a movie called A Thousand Nights of Terror. By the title, you'd think it was a horror movie. Once it started and music played, I realized my mistake of picking a musical. It wasn't terrible by any means, just not what we wanted. Another instance, I planned a night out at the park when our favorite band came to town. Unfortunately, I didn't predict the rain, so the show was canceled in the last minute and we stood in the rain for five minutes before behind sent away. Needless to say, that night was a dud. No worries, though! I've learned a lot through these incidents and I'm going to help you. With a little help from everyone, and everything that I've seen, I've put together the perfect guide for you and your friends. Follow these rules and I guarantee your sleepover will be a success!

food

1 The first thing, and it is one of the biggest, is that you need the right food. If you're someone who can cook, that's the best! I've made snacks and drinks for my friends, trying new things, and checking out which ones they prefer. Healthy food is good to have. Things like small pieces of fruit or vegetables work well when you're starting out. Of course, junk food is also a must! Personally, I like to start with salty and savory snacks first. Chips, popcorn, and nuts with a dash of salt works. If you cook like I do, gyoza is a nice touch for a sleepover. Maybe even spring rolls if you have the time! Edamame is also great and you can't go wrong with pocky (though I prefer to eat that in between the sleepover, not in the beginning). For dinner, pizza works when you don't want to cook. I've also ordered sushi in the past. When we're up for it and the weather's nice, we might head out to one of our favorite places. There are teashops and coffeeshops that are great for some quiet time. Many of them also sell small pastries and sandwiches so you can chew on those while talking. Maybe we might go to a fast-food place. If we're bold, we might go to a nicer restaurant and order some of our favorite things such as ramen or grilled meat. Again, these are for the days where we don't want to stay indoors. If it's too cold or wet, either I make food or I order in. Finally, no dinner is complete without something sweet. Here's when you break out all your ice cream and cake. Eat those as you're getting ready to watch movies, TV, or just chat amongst yourselves. For drinks, have a variety of them. Tea and coffee work great all year round but especially on cold nights. Soda is perfect with pizza and salty snacks. Fruit juices and milkshakes? Hey, get them or make them, they're perfect for all. And of course, you can't go wrong with water.

entertainment

2 The second thing is to plan out your entertainment. What you'll do depends on how man people you're going to have. Renting movies works well, but make sure you agree what movie you want to watch. If half of your guests hate scary movies, then you probably don't want to bring a scary movie. Find something that you all have in common and rent a movie that you'll all enjoy. Of course, if the night is nice and you've got enough money, you can go see a movie at the theater. That plus snacks and drinks? It'll turn your sleepover into the greatest thing ever! You get to sit together and react to everything happening on the big screen. If your favorite show is on that night, you can all sit together and watch that. I've taped a bunch of episodes of old shows that all of us watched many times. We like the rom com, 20 Nights in Tokyo, but can't always watch it since it comes on so late. A lot of times, I'm too tired to stay up and watch. I might have something else to do the next day. The same can be said for my friends. We can never catch it, so I end up taping it and watching it the next day. I might have several episodes that we can watch later. That way, we can all catch up with the series and talk about it after we're done.

shop

Not in the mood for a movie or TV shows? The mall or any shopping center works well too since there are so many different stores. You can spend a lot of time hanging out there and buying stuff. Sometimes all we do in the mall is walk around and talk. It's a great way to pass time. Malls also tend to have game centers where you can meet other people and play video games for a while. If you don't have any video games at home, this is another way to challenge yourself. If you win a prize, you get some bragging rights too. All in all, you and your friends will enjoy yourselves if you spend a little time outside. And if it rains? Hang around in the mall or stores until it stops.

game

When you're not in the mood for movies or malls, games are great as well. I have a whole collection of board games that we play whenever we can't think of anything else to do. I also have playing cards, and I've taught my friends different games with them. Want something a little more daring? Try Spin the Bottle or Truth or Dare. That always leads your friends to do the craziest things and reveal insane stuff. (I've heard way too many stories to wonder if any of them are true now. For example, one of them claimed to have three boyfriends and was dating them at the same time. Another one admitted that she broke into the school and stole a penguin statue). We've also created games in the past, which don't last very long since someone's always trying to change up the rules. Most games are simple and good to play at any time during the sleepover. If you don't do anything messy or break the law, you won't get in trouble with them. Some of the things we've come up with are our own crossword puzzles, word searches, mazes, and trivia questions. The last one isn't as popular with my friends, but that's because they often have trouble answering the questions.

makeup

One thing some of us have gotten into recently are makeovers. Hair, nails, face...break out the makeup kits and start finding your look! I've had both guys and girls enjoy this. Sometimes, we look great. Sometimes, it's all just for fun and we look as ridiculous as possible. We clean everything up afterwards and take pictures to remember our best (and worst) looks. I will say if you're doing hair, be very careful with the hair dye. Make sure you're mixing everything according to packages and read all the labels on everything. I once got hair-dye that was supposed to match my hair...I ended up with green hair instead! So yeah, that was a hard thing to take out. Give the makeover to yourself or your friends. I guarantee you'll both enjoy it.

gossip

3 Towards the end of the night, you can always tell stories to each other. If it's dark enough, scary stories fit the bill. If you want to gossip, go ahead and talk about all the crazy things going on. Gush about favorite celebrities. Talk about who's hot and who's not. Check out the latest fashions in magazines. Let's read the horoscopes or some advice columns. Sometimes, I find recipes in these magazines, which you can try out for later. During that time, how about working on your hair? Or even better, work on each other's hair! Try braiding someone else's hair or tying them up in ponytails. Throw in some bows and twists. Break out the curling iron and straightener! Spray that hair spray around! That's a great way to pass time if you don't want to sit around. You can also take this time to eat while talking and working on hair. Simple things such as popcorn and chips are perfect for these activities.

baking

4 Going back to food for a second, you can always work together and bake something! If you don't have much in the house, take what you have and put something together. Candies, cakes, cookies...they're always great to eat. Get your friends together and give them each a job to do. Make one measure out ingredients, another to mix it all together, another to decorate, and so forth. To get everyone in the mood, you can turn on some music and make it a fun time. In the past, my friends and I have come together to make cakes while dancing. We make messes, but they are sweet messes. And of course, you can have a lot of fun cleaning up while you're making something. Clean up in between each step.

host

5 So, we've covered food and entertainment. The next part is all about preparing your house. If you are the host, your guests will expect you to be ready. If you have nothing ready for them, that'll make for a terrible sleepover. When I first started hosting, I would clean my house from top to bottom. Unfortunately, I spent so much time on cleaning that I didn't have enough time for anything else. So, my friends showed up to a nice house, but a totally unprepared one. I didn't have anything in the pantry or fridge. I didn't have any games laid out or movies for us to watch. And to top it all off, it was raining all night long, so it took me a long time to come up with something.

organize

Organization is key. Have everything ready the day before. Ask your friends about their preferences. If anyone has food preferences or allergies, definitely make note of that and be sure to get them something they can eat. Decide if you want to go to the mall or stay indoors. If you are staying indoors, clean your house! It'll get dirty later on, but you don't want them to enter a dirty house. Keep everything in place so if something goes missing, you'll know. Have places for your friends to keep their things. Make sure there's plenty of room for them to sit around and sleep on. If anyone forgets something, have extra supplies on hand: bedsheets, toothbrushes, hair brushes, towels, and so forth. My friends have forgotten plenty of things, so I'm always prepared for the worst case scenario.

6 Take opinions from everyone, but don't leave it completely up to them. When you do that, you'll get a hundred different opinions and it'll become impossible to please everyone. Instead, give them choices. Which movie would they like to watch, the romance or the scary movie? What snack would they like, salty nuts or sweets? Would they prefer to eat pizza or ramen? Get an answer from everyone there. In case you end up with a tie, you have to prepare a tiebreaker.

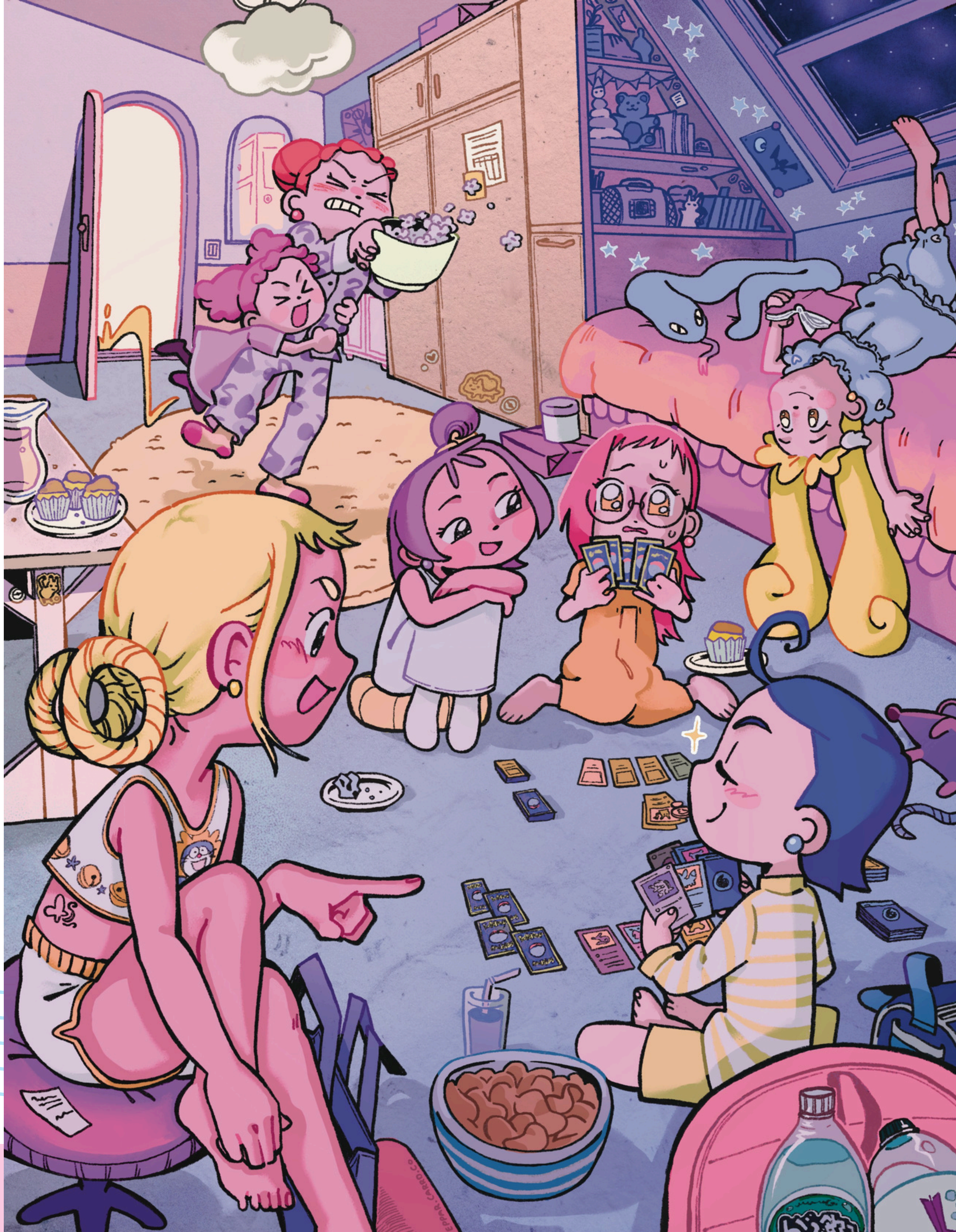
opinions

One time, I made this decision on my own, thinking everyone would be fine with my choices. As it turned out, two of my friends were on a diet, one was allergic to pineapple, one stopped meat for the week for health purposes, and one decided to go on a liquid diet at the last minute. Needless to say, I had a lot of leftovers and I spent the last month eating them. They were good, of course, but I grew tired of eating the same thing each day. So, yes, make sure you get opinions well ahead of time. Get all the information on allergies, dietary restrictions, and everything in between.

7 Of course, the main thing that you need to remember is not to stress about anything. Preparation is good, but you're having a sleepover because you want to have fun. Go into everything with an open mind. Be ready for changes if you need to make them. Above everything else, enjoy yourself. A happy host makes all the difference!

That's all for now! Until next time,

have a great sleepover!



Flextheflex

Rosewater Toners for face masks

pokémon

Ingredients

Face Mask

- ▻Petals of 6-8 undyed roses (organic if available, naturally colored roses are fine)
- ▻6 cups (▻1.4 liters) of distilled water, divided
- ▻Single use cotton sheet masks

1. Pull the petals from 6-8 roses and rinse away any dirt or debris. Place a small heat safe bowl in the bottom of a pot and surround the bowl with washed rose petals, add 3 cups (475 mL) of distilled water to cover petals. Bring the pot to a low simmer and cover with a glass pot lid flipped upside down to allow steam to gather and drip into the smaller bowl. To encourage condensation, add a handful of ice cubes on the inverted lid.
2. Simmer for one hour, adding remaining water approximately 1 cup (200 mL) at a time as the water simmers away. (Safety tip, in order to prevent damage to the bowl the rosewater is gathering in, try to warm the remaining water before adding.)
3. Discard or compost the spent petals and allow the rosewater in the bowl to cool completely before storing rosewater in a sealable container in the fridge.
4. 6 cups (1.4 liters) of water will yield roughly 1 cup (230 mL) of rosewater. Store in the refrigerator for up to 6 months, discard if any discoloration occurs.

Allergy Warnings:
Roses, Cucumber,
Chamomile, Witch Hazel

Equipment

Pot with a Glass Lid, Small Heat Safe Bowl, Cotton Sheet Mask, Ice Cube Trays, and Sealable Containers

To use:

Add enough cooled rosewater to a sheet mask to saturate it and apply to your face for 15-25 minutes. Massage remaining moisture into skin when finished.

Variations:

Witch Hazel Rosewater Toner:

▻1 cup (230 mL) rosewater
▻2 ounces (30 mL) of good quality witch hazel

Add 2 ounces (30 mL) of witch hazel to the cooled rosewater and mix thoroughly. Saturate a sheet mask to use. Addition of witch hazel helps to reduce inflammation and redness.

Cucumber Rosewater Toner:

▻1 cup (230 mL) rosewater (use white roses for cleanest results), divided
▻3-4 ounces (85-100 grams) cucumber, chopped

Puree 3-4 ounces (85-100 grams) of chopped cucumber with 1 cup (230 mL) of rosewater and strain through cheesecloth or a coffee filter. Saturate a sheet mask to use or freeze in an ice cube tray for a cooling skin application. If stored refrigerated in a sealed container, remix thoroughly before use as cucumber can settle. Addition of cucumber provides a soothing, hydrating effect and can relieve pain from a sunburn.

Chamomile Rosewater Toner:

▻1 cup (230 mL) rosewater
▻1 teaspoon (5-6 grams) German chamomile

Add German chamomile to a teabag or tie into a cheesecloth bag. Steep in the hot rosewater after removing the pot from heat, then discard the teabag once rosewater has cooled. Saturate a sheet mask or freeze in an ice cube tray for a cooling skin application. Addition of chamomile provides a softening effect and can help reduce the appearance of acne scars and blemishes.

top 50

90's jams!

Music Playlist 2

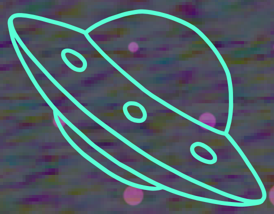
Listen to part 1 on Slumber Party: After Hours

51. Un-Break My heart- Toni Braxton
52. Bleed the Freak - Alice in Chains
53. Criminal- Fiona Apple
54. Sunny Came Home- Shawn Colvin
55. Mr. Jones- Counting Crows
56. Its Not Right But It's Okay- Whitney Houston
57. Smooth (FT. Rob Thomas)- Santana
58. The Distance- CAKE
59. C'est La Vie- B*Witched
60. My Boo-Ghost Town DJs
61. Killing Me Softly With His Song- Fugees, Ms. Lauryn Hill
62. Fantasy- Maraih Carey
63. Dedicated (1999 Demo)- Linkin Park
64. Enter Sandman- Metallica
65. Around the World- Daft Punk
66. Self Esteem- The Offspring
67. If It Makes You Happy- Sheryl Crow
68. Flagpole Sitta- Harvey Danger
69. Wonderwall- Oasis
70. 1979- The Smashing Pumpkins
71. Loser- Beck
72. Common People- Pulp
73. Mo Money Mo Problems (FT Puff Daddy & Mase) - The Notorious B.I.G.
74. No Diggity- Blackstreet, Dr. Dre, Queen Pen
75. ドレス(Dress)- BUCK-TICK

I believe in ME!

76. Black Hole Sun- Soundgarden
77. Semi-Charmed Life- Third Eye Blind
78. Pardon Me- Incubus
79. Fly- Sugar Ray
80. Stupid Girl- Garbage
81. Cannonball- The Breeders
82. 3AM- Matchbox Twenty
83. Lovefool- The Cardigans
84. U Can't Touch This- MC Hammer
85. You Get What You Give- New Radicals
86. The Sign- Ace of Base
87. Breakfast At Tiffany's- Deep Blue Something
88. Ray of Light- Madonna
89. You're Still The One-Shania Twain
90. Crush- Jennifer Paige
91. Macarena- Los Del Rio
92. Barbie Girl- Aqua
93. Candy- Mandy Moore
94. The Rain- Missi Elliot
95. Trouble- Shampoo
96. Iris- The Goo Goo Dolls
97. Buddy Holly- Weezer
98. If You Could Only See- Tonic
99. No Rain- Blind Melon
100. Closing Time- Semisonic

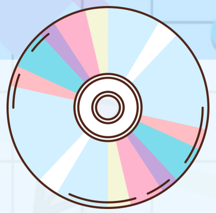
MIX TAPE 90's



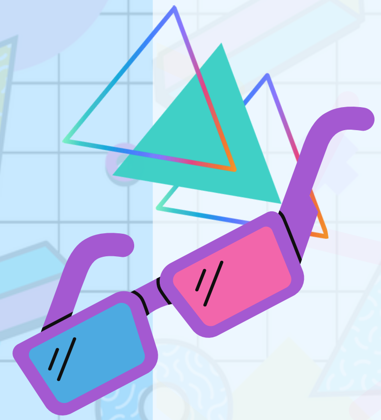
*Open Spotify app, go to search, then use camera in top right to add playlist.

Movie Playlist 2

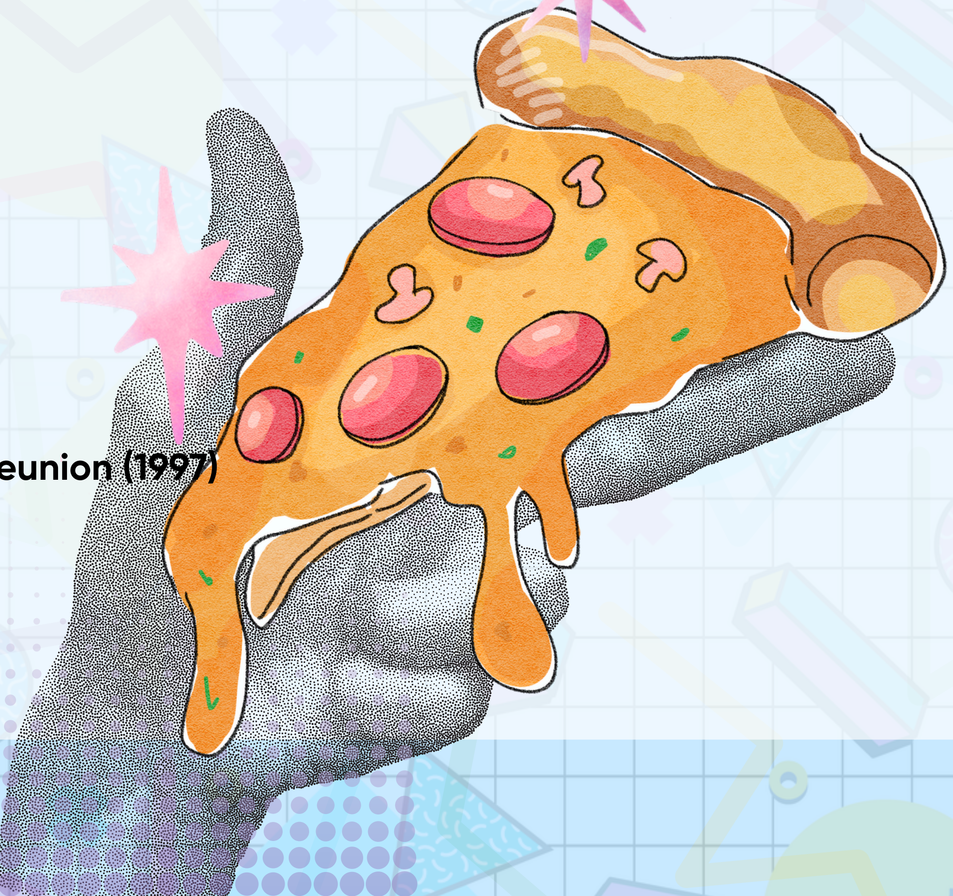
Part 1 on Slumber Party: After Hours



potato
CHIPS



1. Pump Up the Volume (1990)
2. Cry-Baby (1990)
3. Don't Tell Mom the Babysitter's Dead (1991)
4. Boys n the Hood (1991)
5. The Prince of Egypt (1998)
6. Dazed and Confused (1993)
7. FernGully: The Last Rainforest (1992)
8. Ocean Waves (1993)
9. Empire Records (1995)
10. SLC Punk! (1998)
11. The Addams Family (1991)
12. Death Becomes Her (1992)
13. The Faculty (1998)
14. The Iron Giant (1999)
15. Deep Blue Sea (1999)
16. The Mummy (1999)
17. Hackers (1995)
18. Mallrats (1995)
19. Romeo + Juliet (1996)
20. The Craft (1996)
21. Romy and Michele's High School Reunion (1997)
22. Girl, Interrupted (1999)
23. 10 Things I Hate About You (1999)
24. Never Been Kissed (1999)
25. Jawbreaker (1999)
26. The Virgin Suicides (1999)
27. But I'm a Cheerleader (1999)
28. Austin Powers (1997)
29. Space Jam (1996)
30. Dumb and Dumber (1994)
31. A Brighter Summer Day (1991)
32. Anastasia (1997)
33. The Nightmare Before Christmas (1993)
34. Edward Scissorhands (1990)
35. Wayne's World (1992)
36. Princess Mononoke (1997)
37. The Matrix (1999)
38. Chungking Express (1994)
39. Sister Act (1992)
40. Menace II Society (1993)
41. Men in Black (1997)
42. Dreams (1990)
43. Life (1999)
44. Whisper of the Heart (1995)
45. The Fifth Element (1997)
46. Jurassic Park (1993)
47. Rush Hour (1998)
48. Porco Rosso (1992)
49. Twister (1996)
50. The Mask (1994)



blackmagie

advice

The Relationship Patch

ronin warriors

kayura & mia

non-graphic references to murder

Welcome to The Relationship Patch! Here, Miss Mia and Lady Kayura help you navigate, untangle, and—dare we say—patch up your relationship woes. Platonic or romantic, personal or professional—we tackle them all! So send those letters in and let our lovely columnists help you out!

* * * * *

Dear Miss Mia and Lady Kayura,

I'm afraid I find myself in a bit of a conundrum. Normally, I don't believe in writing to advice columns, but I have no one else to ask. My parents have demanding jobs, and this just seems so trivial in comparison. My older brother is absent, and if I'm being honest, I don't think I'd ask him about this anyway. As for my friends, they kind of idolize me and are prone to telling me what they think I want to hear, rather than what I need to hear.

As for my relationship dilemma, it's this: how can you tell if a boy likes you? I realize this doesn't sound like a complicated problem. It's a very common one, based on your past columns, but I'm so puzzled. You see, I recently met this boy. He's very cute, although he makes some questionable fashion choices, and I think we have good chemistry. But when we talk, he says he's going to kill me. How seriously should I take his threat? We've met many times now, and while he always threatens me, he's never actually followed through. Do you think it's just his way of expressing affection? **- Puzzled Pacifist**

Mia: Puzzled Pacifist, first of all, thank you for reaching out! While we're sorry to hear that you have no one in your personal circle to turn to for advice, we're glad you thought of us. That's very flattering.

Now, onto your question. I admit I'm a little concerned. Does this boy talk about anything other than killing you? Is that all your conversations are about? I don't want to jump to conclusions, but this doesn't sound like flirting. It sounds like bullying. Society can be very weird about male aggression toward women. It can romanticize abuse, and it can normalize rude behavior. "Boys pull the pigtails of the girls they like" and all that.

You said you're not sure if you can trust your friends' advice, but what do they think about this boy? Do they like him? Do they hate him? Sometimes our friends can see things we can't. It might be worth asking their opinions.

Finally, this might be hard to hear, but you should ask yourself if this boy's appeal is because he seems edgy and dangerous. Everyone loves a bad boy…in fiction. But this isn't a story. Don't cast yourself as the innocent heroine who'll reform a bad boy. In real life, those stories usually don't turn out well.

Kayura: May I ask for clarification? All the times he threatened to kill you, did you merely accept it? Perhaps I'm being presumptuous, but if he keeps telling you this, it might be because he believes it to be acceptable. If it isn't—and it really shouldn't be unless you prefer that kind of thing—then you should tell him to stop.

As for ascertaining his true intent, have you considered simply asking him outright?

* * * * *

Dear Mia and Kayura,

How do you fix a broken friendship?

Let me give some backstory. I used to be best friends with this girl. Let's call her Pinky. We grew up together. We did everything together. We told each other everything.

Then we ended up liking the same boy. Yes, our friendship fell apart over a boy. It's dumb. No need to tell me. I already know. He's not even all that! He's super hot, but I think he might be a psycho. Which makes what happened even more stupid.

Anyway, my school held this athletic competition of sorts, and I kind of reconnected with Pinky. Okay, to be 100% honest, we competed against each other in a match. And afterwards, I realized that maybe she had some other reasons to end our friendship.

So...what do I do? **- The Ex-Best Friend**

Mia: It's wonderful that you want to mend this friendship. It sounds like you have a lot of shared history. Because of that alone, it's worth your time and energy to try.

Reach out to Pinky. Tell her you're sorry how things ended and that you want to listen to her reasons. I don't know if this past conflict came up during your match, but that's not the best setting for this conversation. Pick a place that's less adversarial and competitive.

Based on her response, you'll be able to tell if your friendship can be fixed. After all, relationships are a two-way street. Even though you want to be friends again, she might not want that. If she doesn't, you have to respect her choice.

But if she does want to talk—and I get the feeling she might—sit down and really listen to her. You wouldn't have reached this point if you'd had a proper conversation. It's time to have that deep heart-to-heart. Good luck!

Kayura: Wait, do I understand correctly? You met again during a match at an athletic competition? Like a fight? How exciting! *Some people* may disagree, but you can learn a great deal about a person during a good spar. The places they choose to hit. When they attack. What makes them retreat. It reveals much. No wonder this raised the possibility of repairing your friendship.

This may surprise devoted followers of this column, but I agree with Mia. I believe Pinky also would like to become your friend again. You wouldn't feel this way if you hadn't sensed something during your match. After all, surely you've had the opportunity to bridge the gap between you two before now. The match sparked something in you. You should pursue it.

And if the "sit down and face to face" conversation doesn't work, challenge her to another match. If she lost, she'll want another chance to prove herself. And if it was the reverse, a winner would never turn down a challenge from someone they defeated. Not if they had any honor.

And if the "sit down and face to face" conversation doesn't work, challenge her to another match. If she lost, she'll want another chance to prove herself. And if it was the reverse, a winner would never turn down a challenge from someone they defeated. Not if they had any honor.

* * * * *

Hey Mia and Kayura,

Longtime fan of your column. It makes for great reading on road trips. Anyway, I'm writing in because I could use some advice from you lovely ladies. It's a long story, but I'll try to keep it brief.

My family history is a bit complicated. My dad was a cheater. Had a wife and a mistress. Even had a kid with the wife and another kid with the mistress. Real classy guy. Maybe things would have been okay if he'd been like other cheating bastards and tried to keep both families, but good old dad decided to do the right thing and pick one woman. Too bad he picked the side piece.

Even that would have been okay if they'd taken me with them—did I mention I'm the mistress's kid—but they left me behind. With his legal wife. Believe me, she was just *thrilled*.

I'll spare you ladies the details, but my stepmom didn't treat me well. My half-brother, her actual son, did his best to protect me. Did all sorts of crazy stuff to do it, too. One night, though, things got out of control and let's just say that my stepmom stopped being a problem. He then ran off and abandoned me. Can't even blame him for that since my dad and mom did the same thing.

Fast forward, I'm no longer a kid and I'm currently on a mission, you could say. And guess who I run into? That's right. My brother. He goes by a different name now. Don't know what's up with that, but I can adjust. What's harder to accept is that he works for the enemy. Now what am I supposed to do? **- Cucumber Fan**

Mia: What an awkward way to reunite with your brother! Familial relationships can be so fraught, but yours might be especially contentious.

As for your dilemma, it's important to remember that you are brothers. Despite what you think, I seriously doubt he meant to abandon you. It might have appeared that way, but I think if you look back, you'll realize his choice had very little to do with you and everything to do with the crime he committed.

Which brings us to the heart of your letter. It sounds like you hold a lot of guilt about what happened. I must reiterate that none of it is your fault. You were a child, and the only ones at fault here are the adults who failed both you and your brother. But I understand why you might find it difficult to see things that way.

The circumstances might not be the best, but it truly sounds like you need to have a conversation with your brother. I'm not sure how you can make that happen, considering that you're on opposing sides, but from personal experience, I know the most enlightening—and unlikely—exchanges can happen on the battlefield.

Kayura: May I ask a question? I won't hear your reply, but perhaps it will be illuminating for you. What do you want to do? At this point, *supposed to* is meaningless. Your father wasn't *supposed* to have an affair. Your brother wasn't *supposed* to kill his mother. You aren't *supposed* to fight your brother. But all those things happened, didn't they?

My partner might disagree, but you should ask yourself if you even want to have a conversation with your brother. He's your enemy now, isn't he? What do you want to accomplish with this conversation? Do you want to tell him how angry you are that he left you behind? Do you want to apologize for not being able to protect him the way he protected you? Or do you want to ask why he's now working for your enemy? Any of these reasons are valid, but you need to figure it out beforehand. Otherwise, your relationship will remain murky and strained.

* * * * *

Dear Miss Mia and Lady Kayura,

I've been wanting to seek your advice on my situation for a while but haven't had an opportunity until now. I'll get straight to the point, because I have to return to work soon. There's always something to do!

A few years ago, I met a man. He had such an interesting philosophy on life, and it turned out we both had an interest in the martial arts. In fact, he devoted his life to it. I really admired that about him.

Unfortunately, not long after, I discovered he was a criminal. But it's my job to apprehend criminals like him! My supervisor has made it his life's goal to capture this man, this man's captain, and the rest of his crew. I want that too! I agree with him. They're criminals!

But…I still admire him. How do I reconcile these feelings? **- Conflicted Sea Gal**

Kayura: Wait. Are you a cop? Why did you write in to us?

Mia: Please excuse my partner! I want to emphasize that The Relationship Patch welcomes letters from people of all backgrounds, demographics, and occupations. My colleague simply has a criminal history and is biased against people who uphold what is right.

Kayura: *Anyway*, I fail to see what the issue is. Your feelings of admiration aren't interfering with your determination to capture him. There's nothing wrong with admiring the enemy. Surely you've realized how common that is. I suspect your boss might harbor similar sentiments.

Mia: My colleague might have a point. I'm not entirely sure though, because I've never been a criminal myself. Still, I understand how these feelings complicate your job duties. Life would be easier if our feelings and values aligned with our career. But that's rarely true in practice. Life is messy.

I think the best course of action—as hard as it may sound—would be to make peace with the fact that a man you look up to is a criminal. Then let it go and move on. It'll help you focus on apprehending someone that, I suspect, is very dangerous.

* * * * *

Dearest Miss Mia and Lady Kayura,

First, I want to let you know that I find your column so interesting. Due to my current circumstances, I don't have much opportunity to interact with regular humans anymore. Reading the letters you publish and the advice you give helps me maintain a connection to the world I left behind. I appreciate it greatly.

Now, onto my situation. I have a subordinate. He's very loyal and I depend upon his assistance when carrying out my duties. But he wasn't always in that role. We first met when he tried to kill me. I know how that sounds, but I don't bear any grudges for his previous actions. He was following orders.

You might be wondering how I came to depend upon a former would-be assassin. Obviously, his attempt failed since I'm writing you. If I may be candid, the reason for his failure is that I bound him to me. It was self-defense, I swear!

We've made the best of the situation. Our work relationship is quite excellent, and we're a great team. However, I seem to have developed romantic feelings for him. I think he might reciprocate, too. Do you have any suggestions for how to broach the topic? **- A Girl with Bite**

Mia: Thank you for being a longtime fan. How wonderful that provided you comfort.

As for your question, however, I doubt you'll like what we have to say. Workplace romances can be tricky. What will you do if it doesn't work out? How will you continue to work together? You've said that you make a great team. Are you willing to jeopardize that? Is pursuing a relationship with your partner worth the risk? Only you can answer those questions.

But it would be remiss if we didn't address the elephant in the room. What do you mean you "bound him?" That sounds suspiciously like coercion and based on your moniker, I believe I know how you did it. If you truly believe pursuing a romantic relationship is worth the risk to your working relationship, you need to release him. Otherwise, you'll never be sure if he reciprocates your feelings in truth or simply because you want him to.

Kayura: Unlike Mia, I empathize with your situation. Mind control happens more often than regular humans might expect. (What a quaint way of putting it! Since you're a longtime reader, you probably know I'm not a *regular human* either. Which is probably why you wrote in, yes?)

Mia: I would like to point out that the Relationship Patch doesn't endorse mind control, brainwashing, or any type of psychic coercion.

Kayura: I was not endorsing any of that! I was simply trying to foster the connection you so often criticize me for skipping over! Unlike you, I realize these things happen.

Mia: These things happen—!

Kayura: As I was saying, these things happen. As my colleague said in response to a previous letter, life is messy.

But she does raise a good point. If you'd like a genuine relationship with your subordinate, you need to free him from the binding. Anything less would be akin to parading around a living doll with no will and proclaiming that it likes you. There's nothing more embarrassing for you and as someone who's been in the position of the doll, nothing more humiliating for him.

If you desire a relationship between equals, you must do this.

Mia: Oh. That was very insightful.

* * * * *

Hello Mia and Kayura,

My problem may be extreme, but I believe you two are best suited to give me advice.

I used to be the commander of a military organization. During a certain battle, we faced a powerful opponent and to avoid a complete rout, I ordered my subordinates to retreat while I faced the threat alone. Against all odds, I defeated our enemy in a manner that might be considered reckless. It worked, though. To a point.

In the aftermath of the confrontation, I found myself taking on characteristics and behaviors of the enemy. I tried my best to overcome these negative aspects but long story short, I ended up killing a fair number of my subordinates and allies.

Thankfully, I was stopped and cleansed of that being's terrible influences. But you see the issue, right? I killed many people. These atrocities have stained my name and made relationships with my surviving coworkers awkward.

Do you have any advice for how to proceed? **- Once-Golden Heroine**

Mia: Um.

Kayura: Since my colleague is at a loss for words, let me offer something to consider. Your previous actions appear to be weighing on your mind. While I will not tell you to forget what you did—because you shouldn't—I will say that fixating on them will do you no favors.

Mia: *What?* How can you say that? She did horrible things. Terrible things! By her own admission, she committed atrocities! She sounds like a mass murderer!

Kayura: I'm fairly certain she is a mass murderer but let me finish. Don't forget what you did. Never forget. But don't dwell on it to the point of paralysis. At some point, you must decide whether you'll let the past define you or if you'll forge a new path forward.

Mia: As much as it pains me to admit, Kayura is correct. You need to take steps toward making a new life—one hopefully filled with better decisions. But your original question was about your coworkers. Regardless of what decision you make, you have to accept that they may never want to deal with you again. That's their choice, and you must honor that.

Kayura: Mia, as always, gives astute advice for those fortunate enough to escape unscathed.

Mia: What's that supposed to mean?

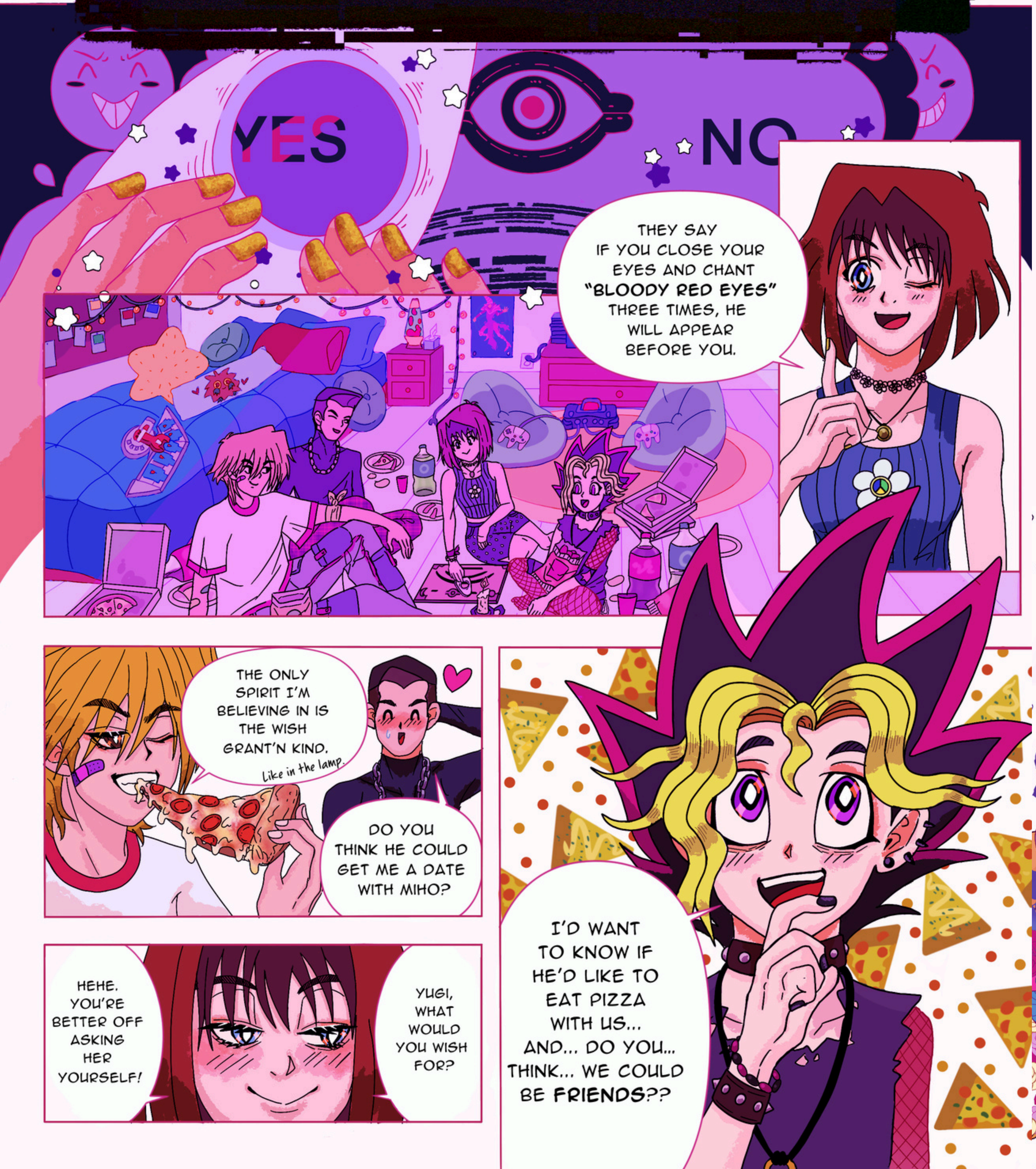
Kayura: But not everyone finds themselves in that position. I know this personally, and Once-Golden Heroine, so do you. We can't change the past. We must live with our choices and the actions we take. People may hate us for the rest of our lives. So be it. But you wrote to us, looking for a way forward. And the way forward? One step in front of the other.

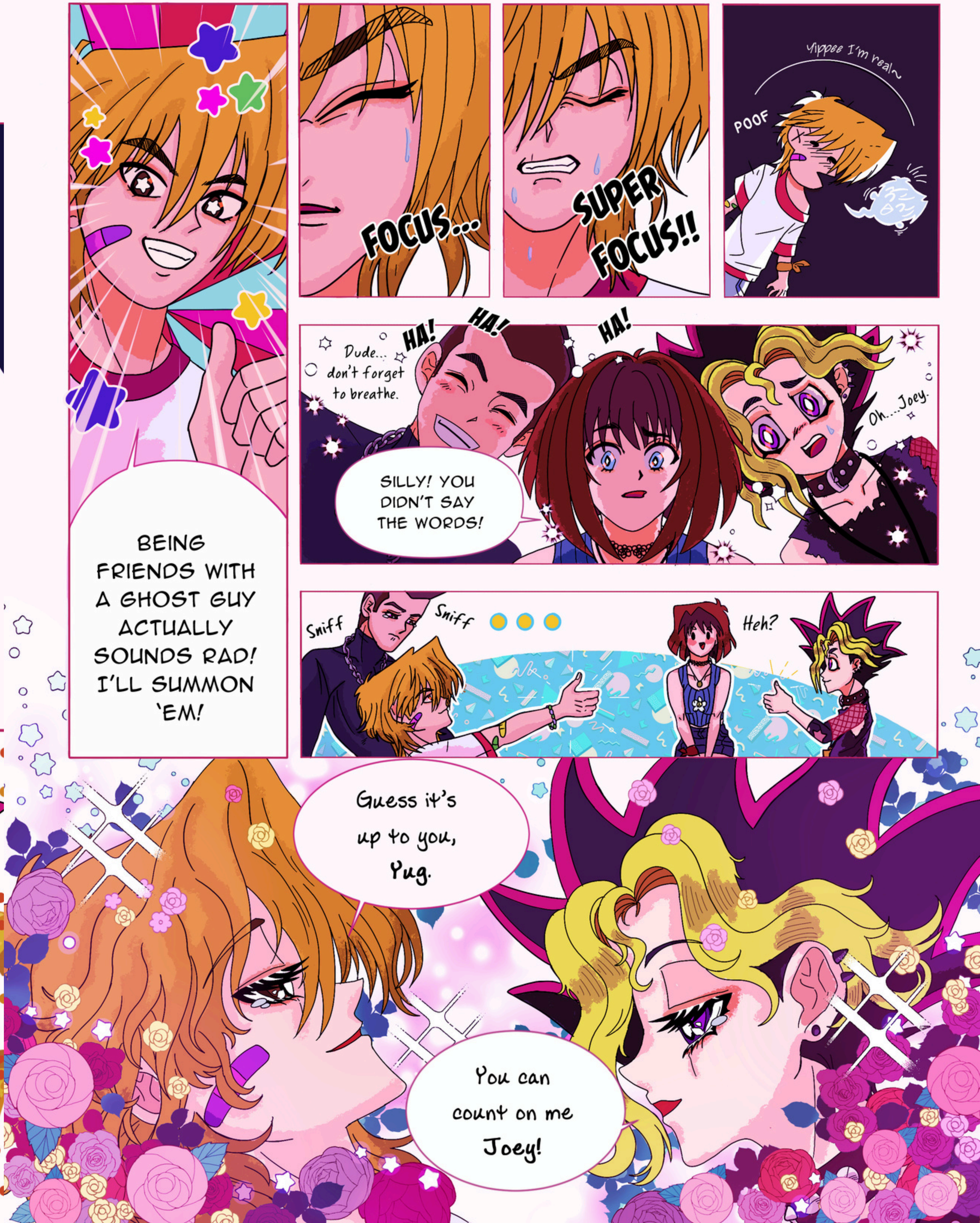
As Mia said, make better decisions. You won't have the life you previously had, but you'll find a new one. Your old comrades may never speak to you again, but you never know. Perhaps you'll forge new relationships with former enemies. The future is vast and full of endless possibilities.

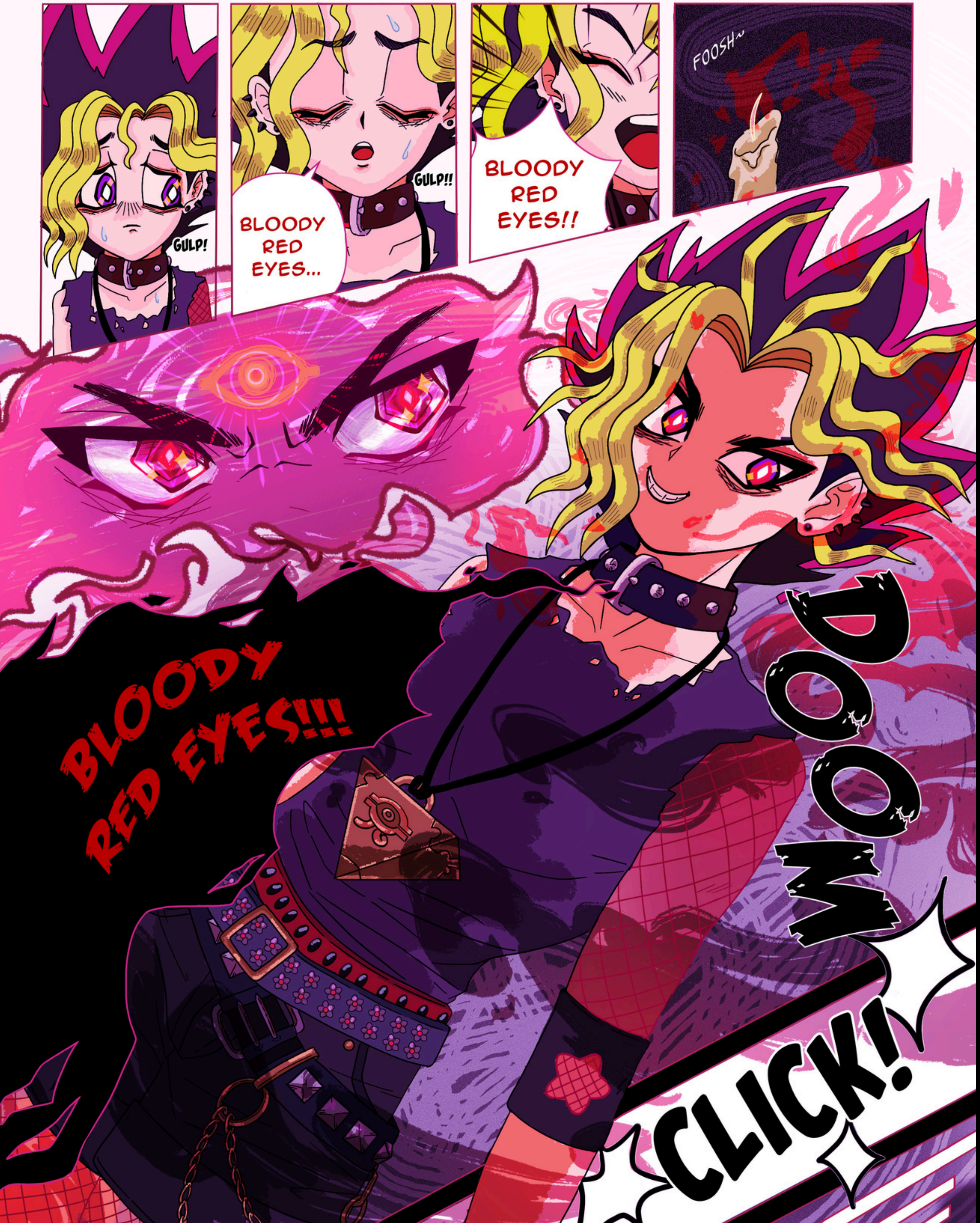
Mia: Well.

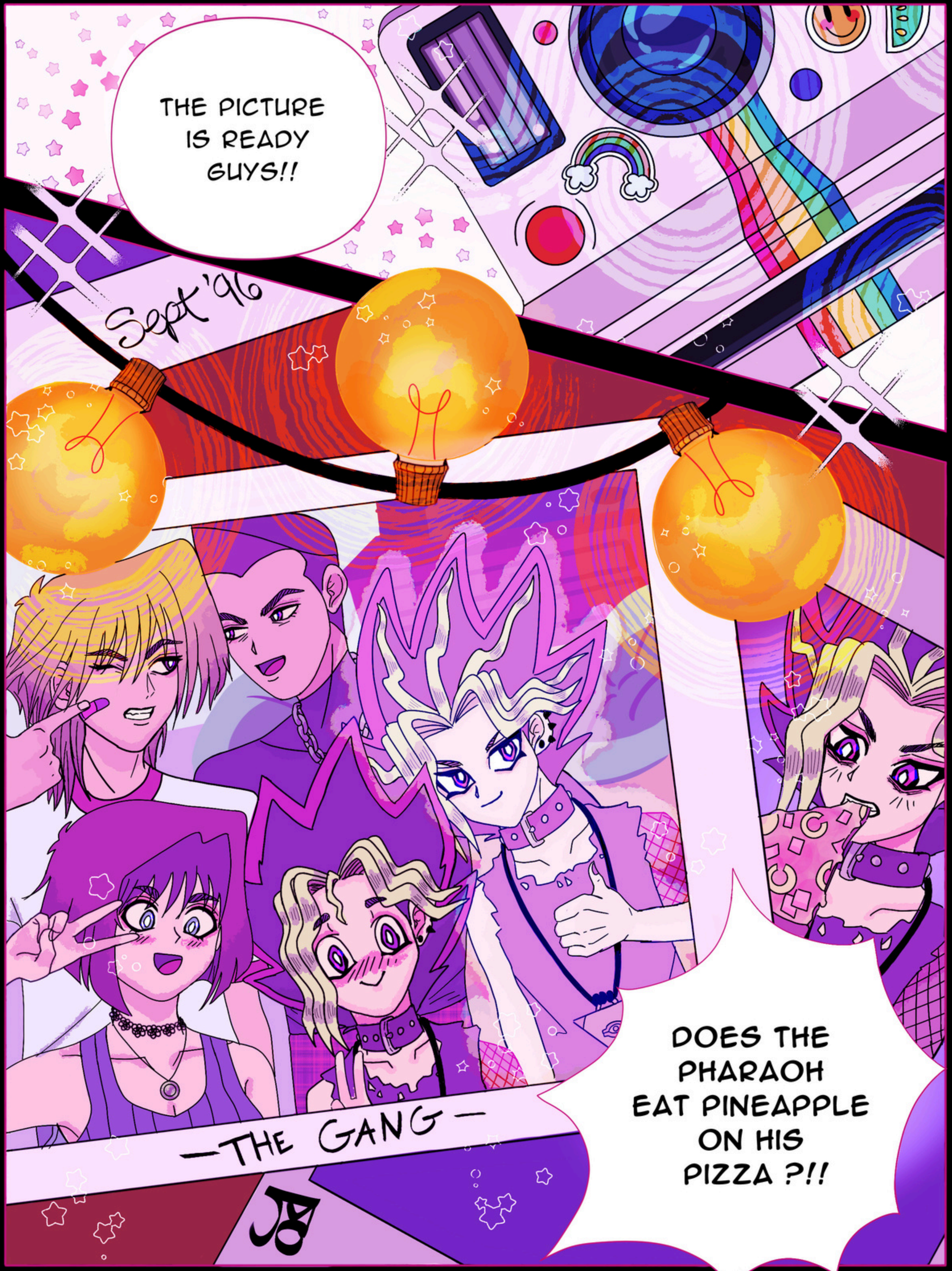
Kayura: Good luck.

ARE SPIRITS REAL?


YES
NO
THEY SAY IF YOU CLOSE YOUR EYES AND CHANT "BLOODY RED EYES" THREE TIMES, HE WILL APPEAR BEFORE YOU.
THE ONLY SPIRIT I'M BELIEVING IN IS THE WISH GRANT'N KIND.
Like in the lamp.
DO YOU THINK HE COULD GET ME A DATE WITH MIHO?
HEHE. YOU'RE BETTER OFF ASKING HER YOURSELF!
YUGI, WHAT WOULD YOU WISH FOR?
I'D WANT TO KNOW IF HE'D LIKE TO EAT PIZZA WITH US... AND... DO YOU... THINK... WE COULD BE FRIENDS??


BEING FRIENDS WITH A GHOST GUY ACTUALLY SOUNDS RAD! I'LL SUMMON 'EM!
FOCUS...
SUPER FOCUS!!
POOF
Yippee I'm real~
HA! HA! HA!
Dude... don't forget to breathe.
SILLY! YOU DIDN'T SAY THE WORDS!
Oh... Joey.
Sniff
Sniff
Heh?
Guess it's up to you, Yug.
You can count on me Joey!


GULP!
GULP!!
BLOODY RED EYES...
BLOODY RED EYES!!
FOOSH~
BLOODY RED EYES!!!
DOOM
CLICK!


THE PICTURE IS READY GUYS!!
Sept '96
—THE GANG—
DOES THE PHARAOH EAT PINEAPPLE ON HIS PIZZA ?!!

Alex

stories

Crush

yu-gi-oh

joey/seto

The living room was a comfortable chaos. Three old futons had been pulled from storage, and two old sleeping bags had been unrolled, they sat amid a pile of blankets, a mess of cushions and a handful of pillows. The Moto's living room was not a large one, but with the couches pushed against the wall, the centre of the little room had become the perfect space for a weekend sleepover.

The snacks were almost all gone, the cola had been chugged, three large pizza boxes were completely empty and four teenage boys whose appetites had finally been sated lay content amid it all.

Scattered around the makeshift beds lay some half-built duel monster decks, playing on the television was a movie long forgotten, the volume down to zero and the teens' minds on more important things.

Love.

Usually, nothing came between the guys and duel monsters. Yugi and Joey had proven especially dense over the years. But when it was so far past midnight that morning was getting ready to raise its head, the group's minds drifted to crushes.

After all, what better conversation fodder was there in a sleepover, if not matters of the heart?

"You got a crush on anyone, Yug'?" Tristan asked playfully, he accompanied the question with a grin and an elbow shove strong enough to send the smaller teen flying. Tristan righted him quickly. "Whoops!" he added in a cheerful stage-whisper, aware that Yugi's grandpa was asleep in the other room and they had to keep the noise down, at least a little.

Yugi flustered, his cheeks so red that they were practically glowing in the low light of the room.

"Ooooh!" the others jeered playfully in reaction.

"You have someone you like?" Tristan prodded more. "No way?! Who is it?"

"I can't tell you guys that!" Yugi blustered quickly.

"Yeah you can!" Tristan goaded, Yugi had piqued everyone's interest with his reaction.

He shook his head, hands clenching his cheeks like that would do any good to hide the blushing.

"Well, how about this? Do we know 'em?"

Yugi nodded shyly.

The boys cooed even more, scrambling over their blankets, duel monster cards and snacks to get even closer to Yugi, who'd suddenly found himself the centre of attention.

"You can't just leave it at that! Spill! You never told me you had a crush! Who is it, Yug'?" Joey asked, wide eyed and enthralled, he glanced quickly to Bakura who was giggling his hand over his mouth.

"What?"

"Isn't it obvious?" Bakura asked.

"Well, if it was obvious, we wouldn't be asking, now, would we smarty-pants?" Tristan bit back.

"Come on Yug' don't be shy. Tell us who it is!"

"Oh, I don't know, it's so embarrassing and—"

"Everyone else will say their crushes," Tristan insisted, despite the horrified reaction by Bakura and Joey.

"We don't have to do that…do we?" Bakura asked nervously, fiddling with the neck of his oversized sleep shirt nervously.

"Yeah! It'll be fun."

"I really don't know about that," Bakura countered.

"Well… I guess I trust you guys. But… promise you won't tell her?" Yugi, ever trusting, held out his pinkie finger, making the guys all swear individually they wouldn't spill his secrets.

"This is a sleepover covenant," Tristan promised earnestly. "Whatever you say here will stay here. Or else… or else… uhh…" Tristan fought to think of a suitably threatening punishment for any of the boys at the party who proved to have loose lips, spilling secrets.

"Or else Tristan's sister will get to practice her hairdressing on you," Joey supplied.

The group shuddered.

They'd heard more than one story about Tristan's older sister and her misadventures in beauty school.

"Promise," they all said in solemn unison.

"So," Tristan prompted, looking at Yugi pointedly.

Yugi closed his eyes, and held his millennium puzzle close, like it was the source of the bravery he was mustering.

"It's Tea."

"Tea?!" Joey and Tristan gawked in unison.

"I had quite the suspicion about that," Bakura admitted.

"Am I too obvious?" Yugi panicked.

Bakura shook his head.

"You weren't obvious. But I don't know why you shouldn't be, Yugi! You're a brilliant friend, and kind too. You're funny, and I know Tea loves spending time with you. You're someone important to her."

"But… sometimes I worry…" He devolved into mumbling that even Bakura, who was by his side, couldn't make it out.

"Tea?!" Tristan repeated, still flabbergasted at the revelation. "I never saw it coming!"

"What you worried about Yug'? A fine guy like you shouldn't be worried about nothin! I say you tell Tea how you feel. I've seen the way she looks at you sometimes. I'm no romantic genius, Casanova type, but I think there's an attraction there."

Joey had been aiming to cheer Yugi up, so he didn't expect the flash of sadness in his friend's eyes.

"What's up?" Joey asked. "Come on, you're with your pals here, Yug'."

Yugi was silent for a moment, and his friends, sensing this was not information they could tease out of him, decided it was best to give him the moment he needed to settle his thoughts.

Idly, Yugi continued to play with his puzzle, his feet burrowing into the plush mess of blankets on the floor, as though in search of a little comfort.

"Sometimes," he said slowly. "I'm not sure if it's the real me Tea likes being around. Maybe she just likes Pharaoh. He's smarter than me and better at Duel Monsters. He's more confident, more assured. I'm sure Tea would like someone like that far more than she'd ever like me."

“Woah! Are you crazy?” Joey exclaimed, though his next words were muffled as Tristan clapped his hand over his mouth, hissing at him to keep his volume down.

“Gah!” He wiped his lips on his sleeves with an expression of disgust. “Your hands are so clammy.”

“So I’ve been told,” Tristan responded enigmatically, though Joey only scowled in response.

“Seriously Yug’, you’re being far too hard on yourself. Tea was our friend long before Pharaoh ever came around, and I seriously doubt she was hanging around because of Tristan and my good looks and smarts.’”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Tristan questioned.

Joey shot Yugi and Bakura a look that spoke volumes.

Yugi’s shoulders, once slumped, rose a little.

“Do you really think so?”

The trio surrounding him nodded.

“She loves hanging out with you, and she even complained about how she wished she could have been here today, had she not been working late at the diner. You’re important to her, Yug’! You’re the first person she’d ever told her dream of going to a dance academy about.”

“We’re not saying you need to confess to her,” Bakura added hurriedly. “We’re just saying that we know she cares about you, Yugi, just as much, or maybe even a little more than she cares about Pharaoh. Or... perhaps she cares about you both, but in different ways.”

“Well said, Bakura,” Tristan said, rubbing his nose with a finger like he had been the one to articulate the thought.

Yugi paused with the faraway look in his eyes he occasionally had when conversing with the Pharaoh. A soft smile grew on his face, and his cheeks pinkened.

“Thanks, you guys.”

“Any time, Yug!” Tristan smiled. “Now who is next? Hmmm... eenie, meanie, minie, Bakura! Who do you have a crush on then?”

“Me?!” Bakura yelped, as loudly as he dared. “I... no one?! I don’t have a crush on anyone.”

“Me thinks the lady doth protest too much,” Tristan said smugly, turning to the others to add, “I heard that in my sister’s telenovela. Come on, chop chop, who do you have the hots for then, Bakura?”

Bakura hung his head, looking far more interested in his blanket than his friends.

“Oh you can’t wiggle your way out of this Bakura. If you don’t tell me, I’m gonna have to tickle it out of you! One, two—OOF.”

Tristan’s ominous tickling motions were thwarted by a pillow pelted with unerring accuracy at his face.

“Joey!” Tristan complained.

“Shut it, Tristan. Give Bakura a minute to get his confidence up. Not everyone has the emotional range of a blunt pencil.”

“Why a blunt pencil?” Tristan gestured to his styled hair. “I’ve always considered myself to be pretty sharp.”

“I think that might be part of your problem,” Joey muttered.

“I like Mai Valentine,” Bakura blurted out, his own widening eyes showing that even he was surprised with his admittance.

"Wow, Mai? She’d eat you up, Bakura," Tristan grinned. "But you’ve got some good taste though, dude. She’s hot but in a scary kinda way. Scary hot. Hot scary? Either way, I’m into it."

"Mai is a woman of great depth," Yugi added. "She might seem arrogant and self-absorbed, but she’s grown a lot since we’ve met. I’m proud to call her my friend. She’s also... very beautiful."

That was perhaps as close to gossiping about girls as Yugi could get, Tristan and Joey grinned at his attempt. Bakura nodded in agreement.

"I haven't had much chance to talk to her, but she certainly is beautiful, and an amazing duellist. Her strategies are top tier. I could learn a lot from her."

"I bet you coul– YOUCH! Joey!" Tristan rubbed his rib unhappily. Joey's elbow had just collided with it painfully and he wasn't sure he was brave enough to finish the rest of his joke with Joey, Mei's close friend, around.

"I have her autograph," Bakura admitted shyly.

The group cooed.

"I was going to talk to her at a small tournament a few months ago, but I got nervous and blurted out "I'm a big fan!" After that, I was too embarrassed to say anything. I just wanted the ground to swallow me whole."

"Oh Bakura," Yugi chuckled. "Next time we're all in a tournament together, I'll make sure to help you make a better impression."

"Thanks Yugi, you're too kind. Maybe I'll make less of a fool of myself."

"Maybe Mai likes 'em pathetic. She likes Joey so– YOUCH! That was the same spot, Joey!"

"I know," Joey grinned vindictively. "Well, that means it's your turn Tristan. You've subjected these two to your questioning. Let's see how you like being in the hot seat."

"I like Serenity," Tristan announced. Unlike Yugi and Bakura, Tristan had no qualms about announcing his affection.

"My sister? I know you do," Joey's expression quickly turned into a scowl. "It's not like you've been hiding it. You and Duke have practically turned it into a damn competition."

"It's not a competition, Joey. Well, it might be to Duke, but that just means he doesn't take true love as seriously as I do."

"True love?" Joey spluttered. "Since when was it true love? I thought you said you had a crush on her?!"

"Can't I have both?"

"I mean... I guess... but I don't like it. Serenity is too good for an idiot like you."

"She is," Tristan agreed. "She's the kindest, most gentle person I've ever met. I've never cared more about someone else's happiness before Serenity. Tristan looked to the ceiling for a long moment. "I think I might have let my competitiveness get the better of me in Battle City. I don't want her to think I only saw her as a prize, or something I had to get just to prove a point to Duke Devlin."

Joey leaned back in his sleeping bag, the crinkling of packets reminding him that he still had snacks stowed away for later.

"Serenity would never think that, pal. She's too kind for something like that. But it wasn't cool, I know I wanted to knock some sense into your head."

"I hope I haven't lost respect in her eyes."

"Nah," Joey comforted awkwardly. He paused. "She asks about you sometimes. Wants to know how you're doin'."

Tristan's gaze shot back to Joey, and he clambered to his feet.

"Seriously?" he stage-whispered. "I didn't blow it?"

Joey shook his head.

"Yug' can back me up on this one. He knows what Serenity is like."

"Joey is right, Tristan. I think Serenity's the type of person who will understand when people reflect and grow from past behaviours. She wouldn't hold it against you. Everyone can get a little carried away sometimes."

"I hope so," Tristan said, his tone finally growing a little more hopeful. He sighed, so heavily it must have risen from the very soles of his feet. "That feels like a burden lifted off my shoulders I didn't even know I was carrying. Wow. Sharing secrets is amazing. I should do it more often."

"That wouldn't make them very secret then, would it?" Bakura joked.

Tristan snorted, "You're right there, Bakura. We knew you were the smart one of the group. Now… Yugi, Bakura, yours truly, we've all laid our hearts out like attack cards in a duel, for the whole world to see, or at least, the whole sleepover to see. That means we've found our next contestant. Come on Joey, give us a lil sneak peek into your non-existent love life."

"What is there to say?" Joey chuckled nervously. "Non-existent is exactly right. Just as you said. No romance here. No crushes either. Who needs em? Not me."

"Woah, your acting skills are almost as bad as your school grades."

"What? I'm not acting. I just don't have a crush on anyone!"

"Nuh uh," Tristan retorted.

"Yuh huh," Joey snapped back.

"You don't have to say if you don't want to, Joey," Yugi added hurriedly.

"Shut up Yugi, yes he does!"

"Why?" Bakura questioned. "If he doesn't feel comfortable, he really doesn't have to. It was just supposed to be a bit of fun. I don't want anyone getting upset."

His nervous expression didn't do anything to dissuade Tristan, who was a man on a mission.

A well timed forward roll and a quick snaking arm and Tristan had Joey firmly in a headlock. "I'm not above giving you a noogie if you don't tell."

"Noogie it is," Joey pouted. "You're getting' nothin' outta me, pal."

"An Atomic Noogie," Tristan threatened. "The one that makes people worry they'll get a bald spot."

"I don't wanna be bald!"

"Then dish!"

"Fine! Fine!" Joey wrestled out of Tristan's grasp, tossing a balled up pair of socks he found on the ground in the other teen's face for good measure. He scooted back until he was out of reach of Tristan's impromptu attacks. There was an expression of something the others couldn't quite place.

Worry, Bakura suspected.

Fear, Yugi wondered.

Indigestion, Tristan thought.

"You're not gonna like it," Joey mumbled. He looked a little pale and he hung his head, picking at a loose string on his sleeping bag. "I'm telling you because you all were brave, and admitted your crushes… but you're gonna … well…"

The group fell quiet, waiting for Joey to speak. He brushed away a few cookie crumbs that had fallen on his blanket and took a slow breath.

"Kaiba."

"Hmm?" Tristan questioned.

For a second it sounded like Joey had said Kaiba.

But that couldn't possibly be correct.

"Kaiba. I like that stupid stuck up right boy, alright?" The words fell from his lips like a dam had burst. "I can't help it. I have a crush on a guy, okay? I don't know why. I just do. And I know it's weird. And I know I should like girls. And I know it's wrong. But I just don't see them that way. It's not like I have a crush on every guy I see, or that I'm a creep. So that's why I didn't wanna say anything, because now you're gonna know I'm a freak."

"You are not a freak, Joey," Yugi said sternly. "And it's not weird, or wrong."

"Joey, not everyone likes girls, just like not every girl likes boys. We don't think you're a creep. We don't think anything different about you at all," Bakura said with surprising conviction.

"I do," Tristan said bluntly. He was met with Bakura and Yugi's burning glares. "What? I'm serious?! Kaiba? Joey what the hell? He's the worst. Why did you choose the douchebag of the year to crush on?" He reached for a bag of corn chips and opened the bag by slapping between his hands so it popped from the pressure. He jammed a handful of chips in his mouth as he seemingly pondered something important. "Though, I suppose it means you could plaster your wall with posters of his face, he's in the news a lot. And I see billboards of him all the time. I bet you can get posters of Kaiba."

"I don't want a poster with Kaiba's face on it!" Joey protested, flushing.

"You can't help who you like," Bakura chided Tristan, who was more focused on wiping chip crumbs on his shirt.

"Kaiba is... well, he's an amazing duellist," Yugi said slowly, even keen to find the silver lining in every situation. "I do wonder if there is, perhaps, someone ... a little less egocentric , but it's your right to like whoever you like!" he added hurriedly.

"I can't believe you guys don't think anything different of me," Joey murmured.

"You've always got us by your side, Joey," Yugi comforted. "If you need an ear to listen, a shoulder to lean on, we've got your back. That's what friends are for, right?"

"Yeah!" Tristan and Bakura agreed eagerly.

"And to tell you when you've got trash taste," Tristan added, bluntly.

"Tristan," Bakura chided, before turning his attention to Joey. "Well, Joey, why don't you tell us what you see in Kaiba. Surely you must have seen some redeeming qualities in him."

"Bakura frowned, as though he had not quite managed to phrase that the way he wished to, but he picked up a bag of gummy worms and ate one of them instead of elaborating further. He, perhaps rightfully, suspected that if he tried to backtrack he would only end up putting his foot in his mouth.

I mean, aren't you guys even a little impressed that Kaiba has been able to run such a successful business empire at our age? Yugi and I work part time in the games shop and that's already stressful, meanwhile he's being a CEO? And he's, like, really smart too, probably smarter than Bakura... sorry Bakura."

"No offence taken Joey, I certainly can't compare to a literal genius when it comes to a battle of intellect. "

"Yeah, he's like... on a whole other level. I can't even pass algebra, or history, or... any class that isn't gym, he's out there being some kinda super genius, thinking up things that would make my brain explode if I tried to understand it."

"He is a very driven and intelligent person," Yugi agreed. "I'm often impressed at how Kaiba manages to balance school, his job and his life as a duellist."

"Not to mention that he's the one caring for Mokuba. When you see how he cares for his little brother..." Joey paused. "Sometimes, when I see the life he's been able to give Mokuba, I feel like I should have done more for Serenity."

"Joey!" Tristan spluttered from a mouth stuffed with spicy nacho chips. "You're a great big brother. You think you haven't done enough for Serenity? Then you've got to be seriously dumber than you look."

"Tristan," Bakura tried to interrupt.

"No, I'm serious. You can crush on that spoiled ass stuck up rich boy all you want, but don't compare yourself to him. You went through Duellist Kingdom, all to help Serenity. I'd like to meet the idiot who thinks you haven't done enough for her. I'd happily give them a piece of my mind, and my fist."

Joey snorted, and fell back on his pillow with his arms behind his head.

"Yeah, I guess you're right, maybe it's not that I feel bad comparing myself to him, it's more like... I think I admire him a bit, and after a while I realised that it wasn't admiration at all."

"A little like Bakura and Mai," Tristan nodded, as though he were knowledgeable, while Bakura blustered.

"Only Kaiba knows you exist," Bakura mourned.

A smile formed on Joey's face.

"Yeah, I did make sure he couldn't ignore me, didn't I?"

"You've made quite the impression on him, Joey," Yugi agreed.

"I'm kinda happy that I told you guys about this," Joey thought aloud, whilst staring at the ceiling.

"Yeah?" Yugi lay back, to do the same, pulling his blankets close so he could be cosy.

"I never dreamed I would be able to just admit something like this and have it not be a big deal. It felt like a big deal inside my head. I've been trying not to admit to myself I was feeling like this, and hoping that maybe it'd go away. But now it's like a weight has been lifted off my shoulders. I don't like keeping secrets, especially not from you guys. I think I might tell Tea in the morning too. You think she'll be cool about it?"

"Definitely," Yugi said, no trace of doubt in his mind.

"I love you guys," Joey sniffed.

"I love you too, Joey," Yugi said earnestly.

"I love you all too, you're so important to me," Bakura admitted a little shyly.

"You're all just okay," Tristan joked. "Ahhh, no! Stop tickling me! I've eaten too much! No I'm serious, I'll throw up! No, I'm sorry! I'm sorry! I love you guys too, stop torturing me!"

The group collapsed in peals of laughter, muffled by arms and pillows as they fought to keep the volume to a reasonable level but it was hard to do when the cosy atmosphere of close friends that had led to an evening of shared secrets and new acceptance.

In the morning, or more accurately, in the late afternoon when the teens finally would drag themselves out of their mess of blankets awake but exhausted, they would complain about the countless snacks they'd eaten the night before, with lasting, nauseating effects. They would recall the scary movie, rated for an audience much more mature than them, and the nightmares that would follow for weeks. But they would not regret one moment of their hearts laid open, the late night vulnerabilities that led to them all being closer than they had been before and that had helped Joey come to accept himself a little more.

SnailorBee

Love is the Plan and the Plan is Death

neon genesis evangelion

nagisa/shinji

#depressive thoughts

There's something wrong with this place.

It's not new information, rather it's something that has sunk into his very being. With every step he takes, it feels like the weight of the world is pressing down on his shoulders, the collar around his neck slowly tightening day by day—threatening him with the end.

This vast emptiness inside him feels like it echoes out around him; though he knows it's not what creates this broken-down scenery that surrounds him, he can almost imagine a world where it is. The partly destroyed NERV buildings do nothing but reflect the vast hollowness that radiates out from his rib cage. When he curls in on himself, Shinji is almost too scared to press against his stomach; afraid that once he starts, he'll keep going, the walls of his being unable to hold up the weight of him. His skin disintegrating as he reaches inside, muscles turning into goop, bones shattering into dust, until there is nothing left, just the burden of all his failures.

Rei is…different. She doesn't read, she barely responds to him when they talk. Well, not that that's much different than before, but there's no glimmer of recognition in her eyes. All the hope Shinji had upon waking and hearing her voice—having her EVA swoop in to save him—is crushed beneath her blank stare. Still, he tries. Leaves books like offerings by her lonely little box, as if that might help the guilt he feels. As if, if she reads again like she used to, she'll go back to the way she was before. It's a useless hope, but Shinji can't help but try—again and again—anyways. What else is he to do in this place?

Nothing about the headquarters feels quite right. From the empty buildings that he wanders around freely, to the bare room he spends his nights in, to the lack of literally any other people besides himself, Rei, and…

Nagisa.

The other boy is the only light in this place. Shinji has always loved music and experiencing it like this—seated next to someone, creating something *together*, brings something totally different than what he's used to. Nagisa is kind, and a patient teacher. If he could even count this as 'teaching'. It's more like he wants Shinji to just…*feel* it. Feel what they're making.

Shinji has never felt so connected to anyone before, and they've managed to get to this point after only a few days together. He can't decide whether it's just the forced proximity, or, a traitorous thought whispers to him like a poorly concealed secret, it's something like fate. That they are always meant to be like this—utterly at ease around one another.

Maybe that isn't such a big deal to most—maybe the majority of people feel comfortable with their friends and family, but Shinji has never experienced that for himself. Even people he knows well he's always felt a deep-seated anxiety around. Like with one wrong move the people around him will disappear.

(He refuses to examine how much he feels like that's true—that it has happened more than once, further proof of how much shaky ground he's on with everyone. How easily he can mess it all up.)

With Nagisa those fears simply…melt away. Shinji can't explain it; it's like something inside himself relaxes around the other teen. His anxiety can take a back seat and he can simply… breathe, for once, and not feel like the other person will abruptly leave or disappear, or that he'll do something stupid and want to die for making a fool of himself.

For some reason, Shinji feels like Nagisa won't ever judge him, or make him feel bad. Instead, it feels like Nagisa actually…enjoys his company.

It's a novel feeling.

"Shinji-kun?" Nagisa's voice breaks through his thoughts and he blinks back into the present. Nagisa is sitting next to him on the piano bench, a warm line down his side as their arms and legs press against each other.

Nagisa smiles, tilting his head, and his grey hair brushes against the bridge of his nose with the movement. Shinji tracks the motion, feeling his fingers twitch with the urge to brush his bangs aside, so he can better see the strange shade of red in Nagisa's eyes—one that he's never seen on anyone before.

Clenching his hand against the urge, he chuckles awkwardly. "Aha, sorry, Nagisa-kun. I kind of got lost in my thoughts there. Did you say something?"

Nagisa's smile is warm, though his eyes shine with barely concealed mirth. "I was just saying that we should probably call it for tonight?" He shifts, pulling one leg over the bench and then the other, popping up on his feet with a small bounce. Shinji's side feels cold without him, the wind carrying a chill that wasn't there before. "It's getting late."

It's the same thing that Nagisa always says when it's time to leave; when the sun is starting to set and they return to their own rooms. Shinji will eat alone, maybe visit Rei, and bring her more books that she won't read, and he just can't stand the thought of it all. Of how pointless it is, how utterly *empty*.

He swallows down his rising panic as Nagisa puts his hands into his pockets and starts to walk away. "W-why don't we stay longer?" Shinji manages to ask as Nagisa turns to look back at him with surprise. He scrambles for an excuse and lands on, "We could watch the stars."

The crumbling building around them would allow it. Though its walls loom around them, directly above their heads is nothing but the sky, turning an orangey-pink as the sun begins its descent. It would be a perfect place to watch the stars.

Please don't leave me just yet, his soul cries out. *I don't want to be alone.*

Maybe Nagisa hears him, or maybe he's just that kind, but either way, he smiles and before he can even say anything, Shinji's shoulders drop with relief.

"That sounds fun! Let's do it," Nagisa agrees happily.

* * * * *

I really was born to meet you.

The words keep echoing in his head, over and over again like a broken record. Shinji can't help it. He's never heard anything like that directed at him. He can't even describe what it *is*.

"We should head to bed," Nagisa points out, though he doesn't move, hand still holding his head up, body rolled towards Shinji while he lays on his back, eyes glued to the stars glittering above them.

The longing hits again—wanting to preserve this moment. The ache that he feels already just thinking of returning to that empty room.

In another universe, Shinji agrees and goes back to his room. He curls onto his bed and feels hollow, feels something like grief overwhelm him, though he couldn't say exactly what for. His old life? His friends? The love of his father?

In this one, he builds up his courage. "Do you think…we could spend the night out here, Nagisa-kun? Together? Uh, it's okay if you'd rather not, or if you think it'll be too cold, or…" he trails off as Nagisa's smile widens.

"Shinji-kun," his voice is low and tempered with something that sends a shiver down Shinji's spine, "I would really like that."

"Oh! O-oh, good. Umm." He pushes himself up and looks around. Though they'd been lying down with nothing else, already his arms are getting goosebumps from the chill of the air. They won't be able to sleep for long if they just stay out here with zero protection…

"Should we grab blankets and stuff, Nagisa-kun? Like a sleepover?"

Not that Shinji has any experience with sleepovers himself (living with Asuka and Katsuragi definitely doesn't count), but once he's voiced the idea, he finds himself legitimately excited for it.

"That sounds wonderful!" Nagisa's easy enthusiasm sends a shot of warmth through Shinji and they stand together, smiling like loons over nothing.

Quietly, they break apart, heading to opposite sides of the compound.

For a moment, Shinji wonders why their rooms are so far away from each other. There isn't really a point, is there? It's basically only them.

Maybe he should ask about seeing if they can move closer together? It would be nice to be able to walk out and run into each other, or say goodnight right by their doors…

Dreamily, he thinks about late-night talks in each other's rooms, of accidentally falling asleep, waking up in a pile of limbs since the beds really aren't made for two people before shaking the thought away. That would be asking too much, Shinji decides, or revealing too much about himself, one or the other.

Either way, he doesn't want to risk it. Nagisa has seemed like a well of patience up to this point, but Shinji is wary of pushing it too far. The other teen's easy acceptance is addicting but he doesn't want to annoy the other boy.

At this point, Nagisa is his only friend.

Still—bundling his blanket and pillow, then staring at his bedsheets and deciding to grab them too—he can't help the giddy smile that stretches across his face. His first ever sleepover! And it's with someone who he would hesitantly call his best friend. Not to his face! Just in the privacy of his own mind. Maybe he'll mention it to Nagisa one day but…it still feels a little too soon, a little too unreal. Maybe if they ever leave NERV Headquarters, their clumsily built friendship will disintegrate into nothing, same as most friendships Shinji has managed to make.

Scowling, he pushes the possibility out of his mind. He's not thinking about that right now. Shinji is going to enjoy this, his negative thoughts can take a hike, if only for tonight.

When he makes it back, Nagisa isn't there yet. Letting the bundle in his arms fall to the floor, he takes his time snapping out his sheets and attempting to make a cozy little pad.

By the time he finishes, his stomach is swimming with unease. It doesn't look cozy. It looks like someone ripped out the mattress on a very sad person's single bed, and left everything in a rumbled mess. Why did he think this was a good idea? It's stupid. Nagisa is going to laugh at him and he's going to feel awful, and he should just grab everything and rush back to his room. Apologize tomorrow for not showing up and make up some excuse. He can figure out the excuse later, he'll have all night to dwell on it he's sure.

Shinji barely bends his knees, reaching out for his scratchy wool blanket when footsteps make him pause. A cascade of laundry falls onto his sad pile and he looks up into Nagisa's face.

"Whoops, I tripped," Nagisa says, obviously lying, a lopsided smile on his face. "Want to help me organize these, Shinji-kun?"

He looks at the massive heap with something like wonder. "Where did you get all of this?" It's way more than what he's been given, and jealously, he wonders if Nagisa has gotten more somehow. Can he ask for more blankets? Is that an option? He wonders if he's brave enough to attempt to ask someone for extras of things, and determines that he's definitely not.

"I scrounged around for extras. I figured that would be better than one set of everything each."

Ah, well, that makes him feel better. Together, they kneel and start straightening out everything. By the time they're done, it's become something like a nest, blankets and pillows piled up around the edges.

For the first time, Shinji realizes how close they will have to be and he gets a little breathless with—excitement? Nerves? Before he can dive too deeply into the feeling, something soft covers his head and he sputters with surprise, grabbing onto fabric and ripping it off his head.

"What?" he asks, staring at a large grey sweater. Nagisa leans close enough that he can feel his breath on his cheek.

"I didn't want you to get cold, Shinji-kun."

It's a sweet gesture and he mumbles out a quick *thanks* before throwing it on. After he gets his head through the hole he can feel the way his hair has gotten messed up. He wrinkles his nose, but before Shinji can do anything about it, Nagisa's hand pushes into his hair.

Neither boy says anything as Nagisa fixes his hair. Shinji's heart is pounding in his chest as it feels like it goes on just a little too long, Nagisa's hand lingering even when he's pretty sure his hair is laying flat once more.

When Nagisa finally pulls away, Shinji releases a tiny breath that he hadn't realized he'd been holding. Feeling how red his face has gotten and hoping the darkness around them hides it, he kicks off his shoes before practically diving into their make-shift nest.

Nagisa quietly crawls in after him and his nerves kick into high gear as their limbs knock together as they adjust, trying to position themselves. When they finish, Shinji curls into himself just a little, feeling shy. They've ended up facing each other, though he can't quite make himself catch Nagisa's gaze.

"Comfortable?" Nagisa asks.

"Y-yeah."

"Warm?"

"Mmhm." He nods as if that'll help ease the other teen's worries. Nagisa still reaches out to pull a blanket up over them, tucking it tight around Shinji's shoulders.

His near-persistent smile has faded into a slight frown. "Make sure to let me know if you get cold, I can reorganize the bed." Nagisa's concern for his wellbeing is making him feel warmer than the blanket or the borrowed sweater. He thinks it might be Nagisa's; whenever he shifts a clean and vaguely vanilla scent wafts into his nose. Shinji recognizes it from when they play piano together. It's nice to be able to smell it so close without having to force himself not to lean into Nagisa to chase after it.

"I'm okay, thanks Nagisa-kun," Shinji says, trying not to show how happy he is about the well-meaning fussing. "You'll let me know if you get cold too, right?"

Nagisa's eyebrows fly up with surprise before his expression melts into something vaguely… gooey-looking. Shinji can't find another word for it. He's certainly never had that expression directed towards him by literally anyone else in his entire life.

"Usually, I don't feel the cold but…if Shinji-kun wants to make doubly sure, how about this?" Shamelessly, Nagisa wiggles in closer, wrapping an arm around Shinji's waist and making him let out a small *eep*. Their noses brush and Nagisa's smile is dazzling in its proximity. Still, his red eyes search Shinji's face, as if trying to pick out a hint of distress.

Shinji allows his legs to scooch closer, hooking an ankle around Nagisa's. Tension he hadn't realized Nagisa was holding suddenly releases and the other teen presses in even closer, his breath ghosting out against Shinji's face, minty and fresh, like he had brushed his teeth over and over again.

"Okay?" Nagisa asks and he hums in agreement. Nagisa smiles and closes his eyes. Shinji drinks in his fill of the other's face before doing the same, trying to calm his racing heart. He doesn't think he's ever been so close to another person before.

Both of Shinji's hands are curled against his chest. Nagisa has only wrapped one arm around his waist, his other palm open beneath their faces. Pursing his lips, Shinji lets one hand reach out. He can feel the way he's trembling.

When he finds Nagisa's hand he presses his closed eyes even tighter, not bearing to look as he holds onto Nagisa's hand.

A beat of his heart echoes, loud, in his ears before Nagisa's hand loosens in his hold and maneuvers them until their fingers are entwined. Nagisa squeezes his hand and squeezes back, relief flooding through him.

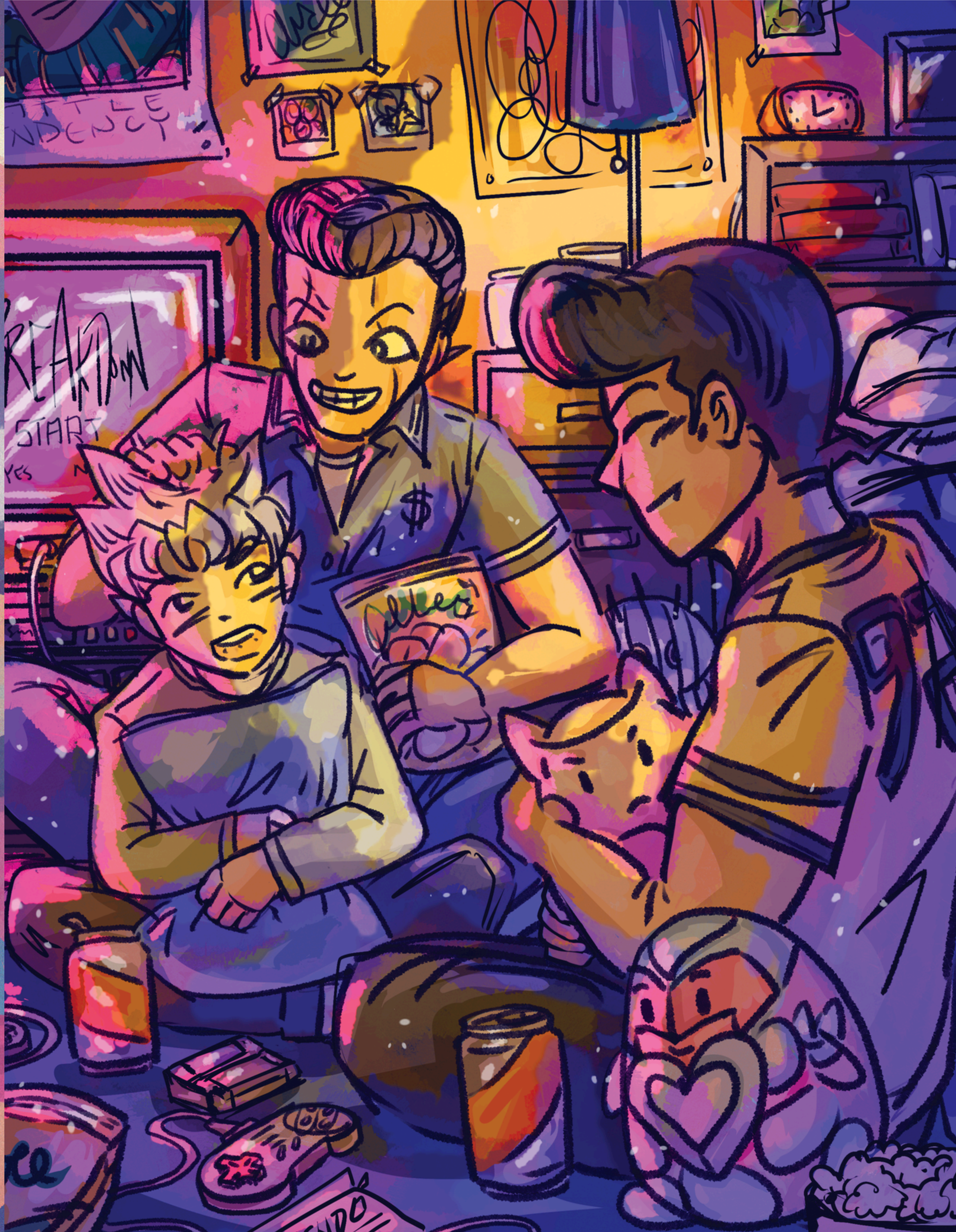
He peeks through his lashes and he can see Nagisa's sparkling red eyes staring at him. He still looks gooey and happy and his stomach flips with butterflies as he shuts his eyes.

For once, sleep doesn't take long to claim him. Shinji feels himself start to drift away and halfway to dreaming, he feels something soft brush against his temple.

Distantly, he hears Nagisa sigh, as if with longing.

"I really was born to meet you, Shinji-kun. Sleep well."

And he does.


TTLE
NDENCY
REAKDOWN
START
YES
NDO

Quillful

Your Knight

princess tutu

fakir/ahiru
rue/mytho

After Rue got into her relationship with Mytho, making them a real power couple that overcame tons of difficulties, she was determined to help Ahiru connect with someone romantically. Being so confident always came naturally to her! The problem was not knowing exactly what to expect from Ahiru's fiercest friend. Rue knew a lot of people, being kind like she was, but she had a mischievous streak that kept you on your toes—and no one was as good at that as the ballet expert herself.

Fakir and Ahiru already knew each other for a while when Rue swore up and down that all their tension was a romance just waiting to happen. Not wanting to let her down, Ahiru agreed to one date. One! It probably also had something to do with that glint in her eye, which said she'd find a way to orchestrate a romance between them subtly if she didn't give her a chance to do it out in the open. Ahiru figured the stern man would reject the offer anyway! But Mytho probably had something to do with Fakir accepting, if she had to guess. Their childhood friendship had to have a lot of sway even with him.

Dour and harsh, that's how Ahiru knew Fakir. Until he picked out a lovely restaurant that she'd always wanted to go to, meaning he was either paying attention or had asked Rue about what Ahiru enjoyed. Either one had her face feeling warm. She was clumsy, silly, and ridiculous. Sensible guys like Fakir wouldn't worry about things that didn't matter—and that left her with the idea that impressing her really mattered to him. What other reason would he have to set foot in that pastel, adorable restaurant that got rave reviews with every single one of Ahiru's classmates?

That thought wouldn't leave her head all night. He opened the door for her, pulled out her chair, and even dressed the part of a gentleman. She'd never seen him in anything but the school uniform before that.

His outfit wasn't even a little bit fit for working on her broken-down car, stuck in his driveway with the engine refusing to turn over at all. She bounced anxiously on her feet while he tried to fix the problem anyway.

Fakir had rolled up the sleeves of his light blue button-down shirt, his black vest hanging open. At least his navy pants would probably be spared whatever other problems her clunker car decided to have that day. The battered pink vehicle was far from the latest and best in the world, but she'd been able to depend on it in the past. How could she have guessed that her car would wind up trapped in his driveway after a perfectly nice date? Ahiru fidgeted more, trying not to shuffle her feet too much as rolled her thumbs over each other. That outfit of his really wasn't something Fakir should wear while working on any vehicle—never mind hers, and for free too.

Not that she could afford to get it towed or fixed. Or to replace his formalwear. So much as getting it cleaned would be a stretch for her wallet.

What was worse? Needing his help when he'd planned such a thoughtful date, or taking up space in his driveway for who knew how long?

Fakir propped one hand up on his hip, resting the other on the edge of her car's open hood. A little sweat darkened the chest of his shirt in the summer heat. The sun was almost set, so at least it wasn't as sweltering as it was that afternoon. Ahiru felt warm just looking at him.

"I don't know what's wrong with it," he explained, letting out a long breath. His ponytail swayed with the shake of his head. A dancer and a handyman too, Fakir kept on surprising her, although everything made a sort of sense as she learned about it. Of course he would never overlook a skill as useful as working on a car in a bind. "You're going to need a mechanic."

"Oh, it's an old thing," Ahiru answered, waving off the suggestion with a faltering laugh. She bought this car online after someone was moving away for college or a job. It used to be a brighter pink, before it faded a bit over the past 300,000 miles. She had an easier time finding deals on cute outfits like her white dress covered in pink and orange flowers. Ahiru spotted it in a thrift store, tossed on a brown belt, and figured that was good enough for one date. She kept her hands busy by playing with the red gem of her necklace.

Anything seemed better than continuing to fidget now that he was looking her way. "Fixing it might be more than a new one. Or, well, a new one to me."

Turning back to the broken car, Fakir studied the inner workings of it. His face was set in the same intent frown that used to make her fume and brace for a lecture. No amount of pouting would put him off scathing criticism, and Ahiru thought she knew everything there was to know about that particular look from him. They couldn't have been on the date for more than about an hour, but so much seemed different after so little. He was thoughtful. They talked about dance and their friendships with Mytho and Rue. When he glowered at whatever wasn't working in Ahiru's car, well, it all felt more like he cared about how to fix it for her—not so much that the dead vehicle was definitely in his way.

"I'm sure Mytho knows someone who can help. I'll ask him," Fakir decided, closing the hood of her car. He brushed his hands off on each other and looked at her again. Ahiru jumped to realize he could see her staring, and she fiddled with her long braid when he just kept on looking at her. He'd given her undivided attention before. Usually, it made her stumble and fall during class, without so much as a blink from Fakir. He only tilted his head as she fussed near his driveway. "You have dance classes tomorrow too, right?"

"Oh no!" Ahiru felt for pockets she didn't have, thinking about the paper ticket in her usual bag at home. The orange purse over her shoulder was much smaller and a first-date gift from Rue. It seemed like a lucky present back then, but considering how the day was ending, maybe it was too soon to be that hopeful. "My bus pass is expired!"

"We're going to the same place, Ahiru," Fakir reminded her in a level tone. She'd have thought he was annoyed if his expression didn't soften into something sort of like a smile. Fading summer sunlight washed over him in warm oranges and amber shades, making her notice the shine of his dark hair that she'd never realized before. "I'll just drive you in."

Ahiru could ride in a car with the considerate, handsome Fakir to get to her house. She'd absolutely be able to do that without embarrassing herself.

"Are… Are you sure?"

"I wouldn't offer if I wasn't."

How could anyone argue with that? She was pretty sure that even if someone tried, Fakir wasn't used to losing.

He was the kind of person who made certain that every victory that didn't go to him was hard-earned. Now that she got to thinking about it, Rue wasn't that different at all. Maybe Ahiru really liked people who got too competitive and intense now and again—not that she had any idea what to do about that discovery either. Thinking about talking to Rue for more insight made her freeze up.

Fakir raised an eyebrow. She felt her face heat up, realizing she'd drifted off once more. He offered to drive to classes tomorrow, and Ahiru needed to respond! Rue was right about too much with those emotions behind their bickering. At least when they fought, she didn't forget to talk. Ahiru gestured to the car to keep her hands busy.

"But I can't get home, and I don't have anything to stay the night with."

"Then I'll pack my things," Fakir said like it was so simple, going back to his house and glancing back to see if she was following. So she did. One foot after another, Ahiru could do that too! With an expired pass and how decisive he was, it felt like an even worse ending to their first night out if she turned down his help. Something so rarely promised! From what she heard, only Mytho had gotten it before the date that changed everything she knew about Fakir. He looked forward again, almost too quickly, and she spotted a little tension in his shoulders as he went inside. He stopped just within the doorway. She came up short, almost crashing into him with a little yelp that he politely ignored. "If it's alright that I stay at your place."

"Of course!" Ahiru blurted her answer out too loudly, too readily. She blushed so much harder and took comfort in the fact that he still wasn't looking at her as he toed off his shoes. "I mean, I have a couch that you can pull out into a bed. And super soft blankets!"

Fakir chuckled a bit, and she was surprised to hear how honest it was. No sharp edge to it. No impatience! His house wasn't anything like hers: Neat, orderly, with a few knickknacks to make it clearer that someone lived in the well-kept place. Someone who liked swords and having all his belongings right where he left them, but still! Ahiru wasn't sure how he'd take to her soft, lived-in place. A practical guy like Fakir probably didn't need things like soft blankets or plush pillows either, but the smirk he gave her over his shoulder said he liked it anyway.

"That works for me."

* * * * *

Ahiru's house looked exactly like he thought it would. Everything was delicate pastels for the most part, and a bunch of incomplete tasks dotted her home.

One shoe sat on the rack by the door. The other was on its side next to it. A rich pink table sat by the door with a flower-shaped mirror on the wall above, and a thick scarf was coiled up on the table in a heap—out of season. In lumpy pottery bowls nearby, coins sat underneath various keys. They were almost drowning in the well-worn stuffed animal keychains attached to them.

"C'mon in, I'll just…I'll clean up a bit," she hurried to say, scooping up sweaters and coats off the back of her chairs and couch. He smirked at a sock left behind on the floor and decided not to mention it. Ahiru seemed flustered enough to have him there. When he started finding that endearing, he wouldn't tell Mytho. He'd be insufferably pleasant about being right about that on top of the date itself. Not to mention her reaction to his own residence, which Mytho had told him was too clean to be personable. It hadn't been an issue for Fakir before that.

"No need to rush."

She muttered something affirmative behind her gathered clothes and darted off down the hallway. Ahiru had a kind of… waddle to her steps that wouldn't seem right for a dancer at all. But it was also cute. He could sense the teasing from his best friend coming already, and to keep that out of his mind, Fakir started exploring the immediate area around him. He stepped into her small living room, made cozy and inviting with soft blankets and vibrant throw pillows. They were all a bit beaten up but fit the purpose. Perhaps too well. He settled down in the middle of the two fuzzy pillows, one orange and one yellow. At least the white blanket went with anything. But the pillows mostly clashed with the plush, blue couch.

Very plush. Getting up, he pulled the cushions off the sofa and put them on each side of the seating arrangements. Beneath was the handle that confirmed what he thought the furniture actually was.

"Sleeper sofa," Fakir said to himself. "Convenient."

Not very private, but he wasn't worried about that. More than that, he was surprised to find that she had a practical side after all. Fakir set the bed up to save her the trouble of sorting it out when she got back. Ahiru planning ahead was almost guaranteed to be half sentiment, and all she wanted was to be prepared for company staying over or someone needing a place to stay in a pinch. Maybe Fakir could do with more sentiment to balance out his own pragmatism. Since his date could find her way to some practicality, it couldn't be impossible for him to go the other direction. One day.

"Alright! So," Ahiru announced herself, with fabric still piled in her arms. Looked like more blankets than the last time. She peered around the heap, chaotic waves of ginger hair framing her soft face. She smiled and Fakir caught himself doing it too. "I've got a bunch of blankets for you to pick from, then late-night snacks and sweets, if you want anything. Do you like sweets? Oh, maybe you—oops!"

Blinded by the stack of blankets while she walked, Ahiru stumbled right into the sofa bed. Reaching out, he caught her and the pile in her arms without a thought. All that would've happened was her falling into the mattress with cushioning to catch her. Yet the way she looked at him, peeking out over the linens between them, Fakir suddenly felt warm. Her slender, toned form in his arms became too apparent to him. The idea of dancing with her wasn't half as irritating as it'd been to him in the past. When did that change? It couldn't have been just that night, or he wouldn't have gone on the date to begin with.

Fakir cleared his throat and helped her steady herself.

"The…blue one."

It was a deeper tone than her usual tastes suggested she'd even have, and that made it the closest to a color he might like. Not a bad distraction either. She brightened, pushing his chosen throw blanket into his arms and dropping the rest onto the breakfast bar counter separating the living area from her kitchenette. Looked like some important paperwork got buried underneath. Before they left the next morning, he'd make sure the other linens were put away so she wouldn't forget her files were there.

"I thought you'd pick that one! It looks like knight's armor, and that really says you." Her words caught up with her with a quick blink, bringing a blush across her cheeks too. At least before she ducked her head down to hide it and poked her own fingers together. "Um. Anyway."

"Thanks." Turning his back to her, Fakir arranged the blanket on the bed. His best friend was moving on after some terrifying hardships. How hard could it be to follow in his footsteps? Another task to complete—and Fakir was good at that. Late growth was better than none at all. Smoothing the blanket, Fakir put the orange and yellow pillows at the edges of the pull-out bed. "I don't mind being your knight."

Araived

Passing Out: Team Seven Style

naruto ~ **team seven**

# brief mention of kidnapping & torture

Hatake Kakashi was never meant to be a genin instructor. It had been obvious right from the start. There was a reason he had hidden away in ANBU for so long, and even once kicked out, he had all but begged the Hokage to let him go without teaching. Unfortunately, it was not to be.

But back to his point. *Him*, mentoring a bunch of small children? It simply wasn't in the cards. Everyone knew it. The day he first walked into the bar with his new title, his friends practically laughed him right out of the place. Oh, Tenzou had attempted to console him, and Gai had given him his hearty congratulations, but it was Genma who had said what they were all thinking.

Hatake Kakashi? Teaching kids? This is going to be a disaster.

And it had been.

Maybe he's been getting rusty out of ANBU. Maybe he's just the biggest idiot alive. Maybe he isn't used to protecting three dumb children while making the fatal mistake of underestimating his opponents.

Whatever the reason, their first C-rank is an utter disaster that nearly ends with Sasuke dead and the Kyuubi breaking free. All because of his ridiculous overconfidence and pathetic chakra limitations.

So what does he go and do on their next C-rank?

Oh, that's right. He passes out *again*, and gets them all captured.

They nearly die, as they often seem to do even under his watch. Kakashi pulls three all-nighters, and *eventually*, they escape, but not without… issues. Being imprisoned, tortured and then on the run isn't very fun. A day's work for Kakashi, of course, but somehow, knowing these kids have been subjected to it as well makes it… different.

And so, as exhausted as he is, even though he wants nothing more than to get back to his empty apartment and collapse into bed, he still makes sure to follow his genin as they depart.

It's not stalking, not really. Kakashi slinks across the rooftops, keeping a careful eye on his students below. They say their goodbyes, and one by one, go their separate ways.

That's fine, right? It's enough that he's seen them safe back to Konoha, back to their peaceful neighbourhoods. Kakashi stands there for a solid minute or two, warm summer wind blowing through his hair, and tries very hard to make himself go back home.

Or maybe, he'll just check to ensure that his genin made it home. A quick peek through their bedroom windows, that's all. It would barely take any time at all.

He gives a long, tired sigh, before taking off, headed straight for Naruto's apartment.

Naruto's neighbourhood isn't *bad*, but neither is it particularly nice. Kakashi believes that the boy's jinchuuriki status probably contributes to the reason why so many of its nearby rooms lie empty, why the streets are oddly quiet. He hops his way across the neighbouring buildings, then stares down at Naruto's balcony, contemplating his next move.

Should he go in? Should he just sneak a glance inside? Surely seeing that Naruto has made it back safely will be enough, he rationalizes. There isn't even anything to worry about, not *really*. This is just to— settle his mind. That's all.

Kakashi sniffs the air once, then lowers himself for a better angle to peer inside the room. He's almost in position, windowsill with its house plants and stacks of empty ramen cups in sight, when he hears the creak of the frame pushing upwards. Kakashi ducks back into the shadows.

There's a quiet rustling sound, then Naruto's blond head pops out, body following as he clambers onto his balcony. A dark nightcap sits on his head, which he pulls off, tossing back through the window.

Kakashi pauses. Just *what* is he doing?

With a massive leap, Naruto is off, hopping down onto the streets below. Kakashi follows him closely. This can't be a regular occurrence, can it? Students sneaking off mysteriously at night… no, this has to be a one time thing. Kakashi suddenly wishes he paid closer attention to his team.

The boy darts through the winding roads, taking a sharp left turn at the library. That's… on the way to the civilian district, isn't it? Another left, and Kakashi suddenly knows exactly where they're headed. He's proven right as Naruto stops outside a nice, square, two-story house.

Sakura's house.

There's a tall tree near the top floor that Naruto shimmies up, sliding from the branches to perch just outside the window through efficient use of chakra adhesion. Kakashi conceals himself behind a further tree as he watches his student rap loudly on the curtained window.

A moment passes. Another. Suddenly, the curtains throw themselves open, Sakura appearing in the frame. Her eyes are furious, kunai clutched tightly in hand. "Whoever you are, I'm warning you—" She stops short. "*Naruto*?"

"Sakura-chan!"

The kunai lowers slightly. "What are you *doing* here?"

"Ahaha," Naruto scratches the back of his head lightly. "I'm sorry if I woke you up. I just wanted to check in on you, you know? 'Cause I wasn't sure if you made it home okay or not."

Sighing, Sakura puts the kunai down, then slowly slides the window open. She gestures for Naruto to sit. "I guess it's okay. I wasn't asleep anyway."

"…oh." Naruto crouches on the windowsill, eyeing her hesitantly. "Were you not able to sleep either?"

She bites her lip. "It's not that! I just—" She sighs again, explosively, but when she next speaks, her voice is quiet. "I'm used to having you guys there now, okay? So it's just strange when you're not anymore."

Naruto brightens, reaching out for her. "Me too! 'Cause I would always know that you were okay when I went to sleep. I miss having Sakura-chan there, and—and, that bastard too, I guess." His voice trails off. "My room is just so quiet."

Something in Kakashi's chest cracks.

Naruto's voice gets stronger as he picks up from where he left off. "But I guess you're here, so it's fine! I'm just gonna make sure Sasuke made it back, and then I'll go to bed."

He jumps back onto the tree before making his way back down. "Goodnight, Sakura-chan!"

"Goodnight?" Sakura flips her way out of the window, carefully closing it before starting her descent downwards. "Where do you think you're going, idiot?"

"Um… Sasuke's?"

"Without me?"

Naruto's eyes brighten. "You— you wanna come too? I mean— yeah! We'll go together!"

"Good," she huffs. "Come on. It's that way. We can save time by going through the alley."

"Oh wow, you're so smart! I didn't know you knew all the shortcuts!"

Kakashi can make out the red tint to her cheeks even in the dim lighting. "Shut up."

He follows them down the dark alleyway, emerging on the other side on a more direct route to the Uchiha compound. This can't be healthy, can it, running around the village at night to check on your teammates before being able to fall asleep? He ignores the fact that he's been doing the same thing.

When they finally make it to the compound gates, the moon hangs heavy in the dark sky above. Sakura and Naruto crowd at the tall wooden entryway, a tattered uchiwa fluttering in the breeze atop the towering gates.

Kakashi can't help the shivers that crawl across his spine whenever he comes here. This is a place spilled with far too much blood.

And yet Sasuke lives here regardless. Ah, well. It's not like Kakashi is unfamiliar with living in a home haunted by ghosts.

Sakura hesitates at the entrance, but Naruto doesn't bother, barging straight through.

"Woah," he exclaims. "The bastard lives here? It looks… kinda creepy."

It's true, in a way. The Uchiha compound is a ghost town. Kakashi can still see the bloodstains on every surface.

Sakura gets over her initial reluctance, following after Naruto with a huff. "It's not Sasuke-kun's fault that everything is so messy."

Kakashi slinks after his two students as they stumble through the clan compound. They're not attempting to be quiet, their voices bouncing off the empty walls and filling the air. It's no surprise how quickly Sasuke shows up.

It's also no surprise that he looks utterly pissed.

"What are you *doing here?*" Sasuke hisses.

Naruto bristles back. "Checking in on you! Why is your place so big? Why is it so creepy?"

"Naruto—" Sakura bites out.

Sasuke's eyes flash. "Get out."

"No!"

"I *said*—"

"We had to make sure you were okay!" Naruto blurts. "Cause what if something happened when you were going home? And now I know that you live in this creepy place— what if you get kidnapped? What if there are *ghosts*?" He shudders.

Sasuke scoffs, but there's less heat in it this time. "There's no such thing as ghosts, idiot." He turns away, walking back to his house. "Whatever. I'm going to bed."

Naruto follows after him, Sakura on his heels. Kakashi stays in the shadows, but follows along as well. This is getting a bit ridiculous.

Sasuke endures it for a couple seconds, before spinning back around. "What are you doing?"

"We just want to accompany you home, Sasuke-kun," Sakura pipes up. "That's all."

He crosses his arms, glowering. "I don't need you to accompany me home."

"Just to your house," Naruto wheedles. "Then we'll know you didn't get kidnapped or something."

"I'm not going to get kidnapped," Sasuke huffs, but he keeps walking.

When they finally get to the Clan Head family home, Naruto and Sakura follow him right inside. Kakashi lurks outside the window, while Naruto spots a couch and gets comfortable, lounging on the dark blue furniture.

"What are you— get *off*!"

"I'm tired, bastard! We just walked all the way to your stupid house! Can't you even let me sit down?"

Sasuke crosses his arms. "I didn't want you to walk here. And you're not sitting down."

"But I want to *sleep*—"

"Get *off*, idiot!"

Sakura stands in the doorway, looking slightly sleepy as well. To be fair, his genin have had a long day. Kakashi gets it. Whenever he gets home from a long mission, all he wants to do is crash. Not run around and stalk infuriating little brats.

Sakura tips her head. "Why weren't *you* asleep, Sasuke-kun? How did you find us so quickly?"

Sasuke clicks his tongue, still yanking at Naruto's protesting limbs. "You were less stealthy than a herd of bulls."

She colours slightly. "Well... we weren't *trying*... But I mean, you were pretty much there right away. And it didn't look like we woke you up."

Sasuke's quiet for a second. "I was going for a walk."

"A walk?"

"Yes," he snaps. "A walk. Just thinking."

"Look, Sasuke-kun," Sakura says hesitantly. "If you're thinking, and you want to talk about something, or— share anything... you can, you know that, right? I'll listen to you."

Sasuke scoffs. "Why would I want to share anything with *you*?"

What a brat. From his windowsill perch outside, Kakashi sighs silently.

"Hey!" Naruto jolts upright, knocking a cushion off the couch. "Don't insult Sakura-chan!"

"Hn."

"Don't just grunt at me, bastard—!"

"Maybe," Sakura cuts in, "*I* wanted to talk about things. Did you ever think of that?" Her voice is abnormally cutting. Her fists are clenched.

Sasuke's emotionless expression doesn't quite break, but it's clear that he's surprised. Kakashi's surprised himself. Sakura never talks to her precious Sasuke-kun like that.

"I know I'm lucky that I have my parents," she continues. "And they love me, and they— well, they *mostly* support me. But they don't understand. Because when I have bad dreams, they tell me it's just a dream. They don't realize that it's things that have actually happened, things that could easily happen on our next mission... They're civilians. They just— they don't get it. And if I told them, it would only scare them. So I don't have anyone to talk to."

It's quiet in the house. Sakura swallows and keeps going.

"So that's what I think. I just wish you would open up, once in a while, because you probably don't have anyone to talk to either, and— and when no one can understand you, it's... sometimes I just feel..."

"Lonely," Naruto says. His voice is strangely subdued.

"...Yeah. And, I don't want you to feel like that." Her eyes shift to Naruto's. "Either of you."

There's another moment of silence. Then Sasuke huffs. "You two are sleeping on the floor."

"What? C'mon! Why can't I stay on the couch? You're not even gonna use it!"

"Y-you're really going to let us stay over?"

Sasuke turns away. "Just this once. Only so that we can prepare for our mission debriefing."

Sakura's serious expression suddenly turns all red and flustered. "A sleepover at Sasuke-kun's place..."

Naruto perks up. "A sleepover? Really? Really? I've never had a sleepover before!" He suddenly hesitates. "Wait! But what about Kakashi-Sensei?"

What about him? Kakashi frowns in confusion.

"Kakashi-Sensei?" Sakura echoes, a similarly perplexed frown spread across her features.

"We didn't check in on him! What if he got kidnapped? What if he passed out on his way home? We have to make sure he's okay!" Naruto declares.

Sasuke rolls his eyes. "I'm sure he's fine."

"Naruto does have a point though," Sakura admits reluctantly. "Sensei does pass out an awful lot. Maybe we could just peek in on his apartment?"

Wow. Get a load out of this lot. Kakashi isn't sure whether he should be more endeared, or insulted.

"We're not checking in on him." At least Sasuke's on his side. The boy continues. "If he passed out, I'm sure another shinobi would have found him by now."

Traitors, the whole lot of them.

"But what if Sensei is injured?" Naruto argues. "Remember when he was being stupid and kept trying to hide his injuries from us?"

Sakura's frown deepens. She cracks her knuckles. "We're going to his apartment," she declares firmly.

This time, neither of the boys argue.

And so it has been decided. His utterly ridiculous genin depart to check on his apartment, just to make sure that he isn't somehow lying knocked out cold somewhere along the streets of Konoha. Kakashi trails after them, pinching the bridge of his nose and mentally planning the intense training regime he intends to give them tomorrow. They will do Gai's obstacle course, he decides. They will do it *so many* times.

Soon enough, they're back at his apartment complex. Kakashi peers longingly through the windows. He could be in bed right now. He could be asleep and resting, and not running around after a batch of infuriatingly over-anxious midgets. But life hates Hatake Kakashi, so this is what he gets.

His genin enter the building, starting up the stairs, and he goes to follow them, when—

Fuck.

The traps.

Kakashi may be the Hidden Leaf's worst teacher. Still, he refuses to go down in the history books as not only the Copy-nin but also that genin instructor who managed to lose one of their charges to a door-triggered exploding kunai trap. He shunshins, picking his way through his apartment window, and hastily ripping off the worst of his exploding tags and tripwires before he hears the loud knock on his door.

Yeah, he's not answering that.

His genin are relentless, but he still can't help but harbour the faintest hope that they'll give up and turn in for the night. A hope that is rapidly squashed. He watches from his hidden perch on the ceiling as his door is kicked in, and wonders what kami he wronged in his past life to deserve this.

"Kakashi-sensei!" Sakura announces. "You better not be bleeding out, or else!"

Kakashi is not, in fact, bleeding out, thank you very much. Well… he does have slight injuries, but that hardly matters. Certainly nothing worth being subjected to the hospital med-nin for.

His genin trek towards his bedroom. Kakashi still isn't sure what to do. Should he show himself? Chase them off? To be honest, he really doesn't want to deal with this situation right now. Also, a very, very small part of him is maybe secretly relieved to have them all within his line of sight. He ignores it.

"He's not here!" Naruto says.

"Obviously," Sasuke shoots back, gesturing at the apparently empty apartment.

"What do we do? Oh! I'll make clones! I can send them all over Konoha to look for him!"

Sasuke looks at him derisively. "You're going to send a horde of clones out at 1 in the morning, screaming Kakashi's name through the streets?"

That… sounded like an awful idea. Kakashi internally cringes. If it really came to that, maybe he'd step in after all.

"No, we shouldn't bother anyone," Sakura says. "It's okay. It's… Maybe he's out with his friends."

Both Naruto and Sasuke look unfairly doubtful. *Hurtful.*

"We could wait here, though," Sakura continues. "Then we can check on Sensei once he finally turns up."

Naruto's eyes brighten. "I call the bed!" He dives onto the covers.

That's *his* bed. Genin. The absolute worst.

Sasuke elbows Naruto in the side. "What makes you think you deserve it, moron?"

Sakura sniffs. "I'm the girl. You should be polite and let me take it."

"But Sakura-chan, I'm tired! Wait, what are you– ow!"

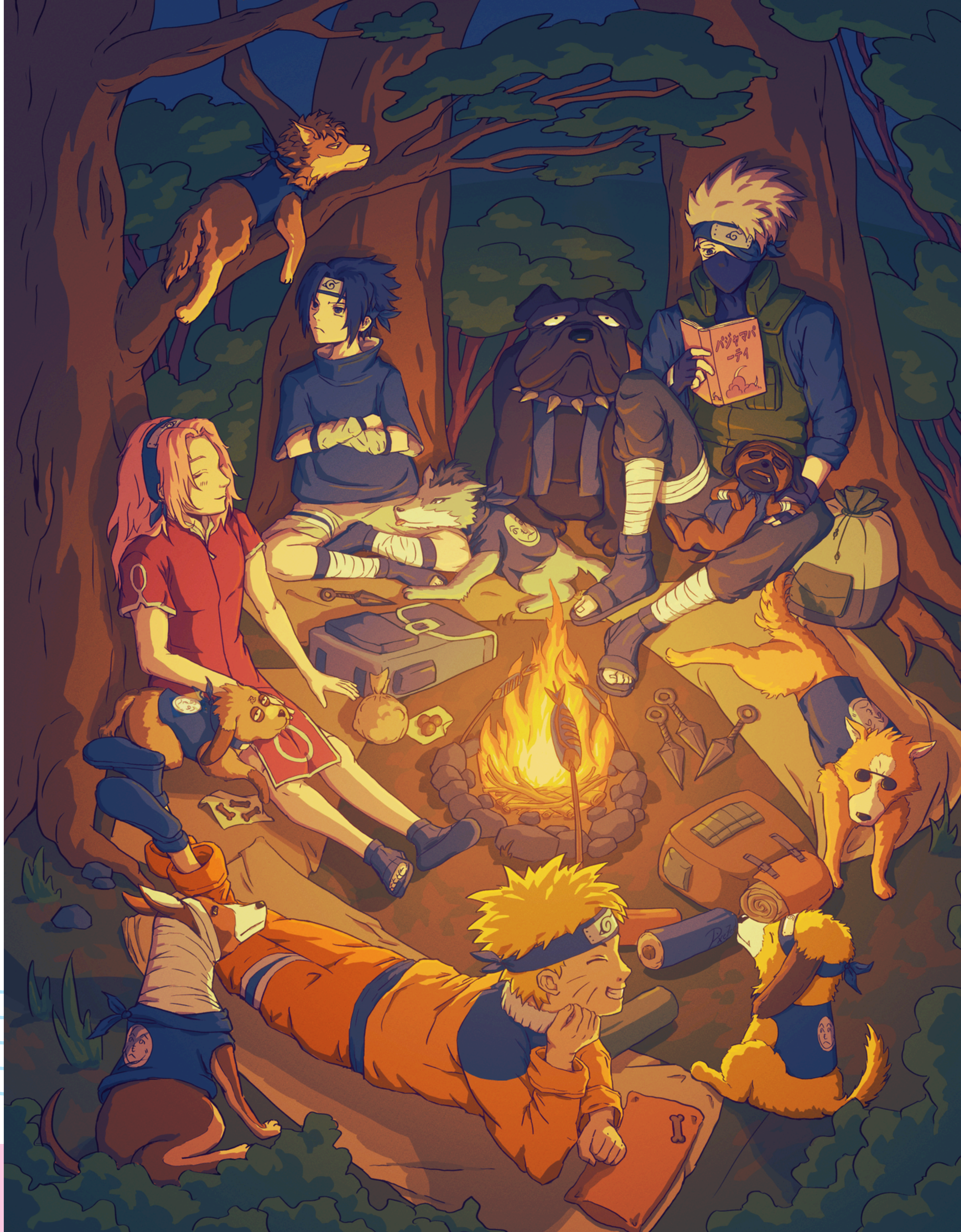
"Get off, idiot!"

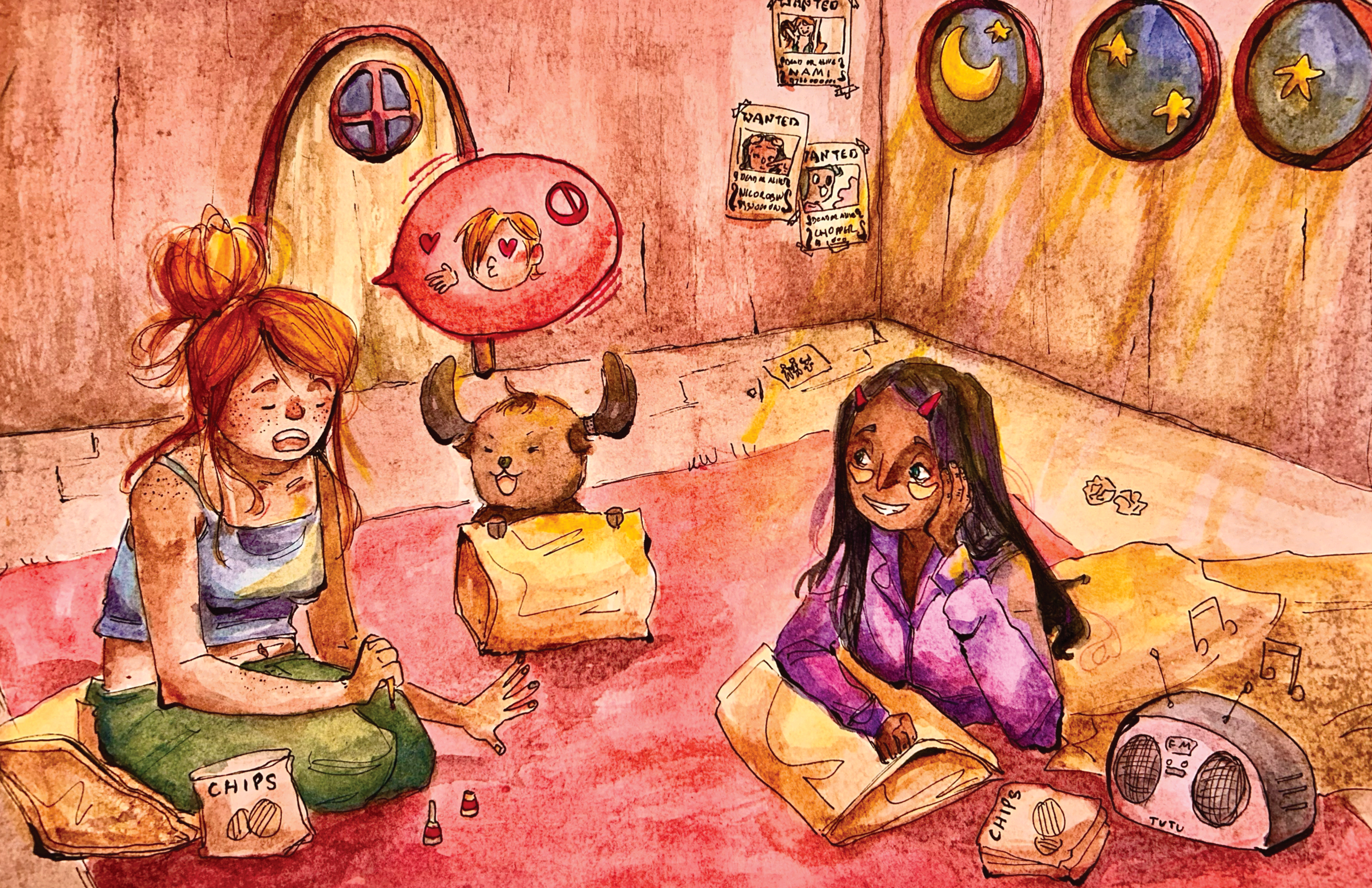
Kakashi sighs, going back to the kitchen, to remove his equipment. He resets the traps by the door and windows. By the time he gets back, his genin are all piled in the bed, limbs askew and completely passed out. They're clearly exhausted.

Kakashi is exhausted too. And that's his bed. He should wake them up, maybe even dump them in the lake for their sheer audacity.

Instead, he grabs a blanket from the living room. Settles in against the wall, half-lidded eyes fixed on his slumbering team members. Kakashi's normally a light sleeper, and a terrible one at that.

This time, he drifts off without any problems at all.

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Shikon Pops

inuyasha

There's many legends revolving around the Shikon Jewel and its creation; how the spirits battling within can be influenced to affect its purity or corruption.

But what if there was something tastier inside?

These Shikon Pops have a delectable, brownie-esque center hidden beneath a sweet coating that shines and glimmers like the original jewel. Additionally, it's much harder to shatter into shards as well, and will not induce a spike in yokai powers when consumed!

Allergy Warnings:
Eggs, Flour, Dairy

Ingredients

- 105g chocolate chips
- 115g softened butter
- 150g sugar
- 10mL vanilla extract
- 3 eggs
- 90g flour
- 450g white chocolate candy melts or chips
- pink food spray
- pink edible glitter spray

Equipment

- 2 microwave safe bowls
- stand or handheld mixer
- 8in round cakepan
- large mixing bowl
- sheet tray or plate
- lolipop sticks
- microwave
- styrofoam block

1. Preheat oven to 275F and grease cake pan.
2. Melt chocolate chips in a microwave safe bowl. Start with 1 minute, stir, then continue heating in 30 second increments until all chips are entirely melted.
3. Cream butter and sugar together with mixer.
4. Add vanilla, then eggs one at a time. Mix until well incorporated between additions.
5. Add melted chocolate, mix until well incorporated then beat on medium speed an additional 3 minutes.
6. Gradually add flour and mix until smooth.
7. Pour batter into cake pan and bake 30-40 minutes.
8. Once cake is done (if a toothpick stuck in the middle comes out clean), allow it to cool in its pan. Do not be concerned if any cracks or falling occur, as the cake will be broken down in the next step!
9. Once the cake is cooled, finely crumble the whole thing into a large bowl. The "dough" should be slightly sticky, and hold its shape when pressed together.
10. Roll into about 2cm diameter balls. Insert lollipop sticks into the cake pops, careful not to push all the way through, and squeeze slightly to ensure they're well secure.
11. Place cake pops on a flat surface, such as a plate or baking tray, and place in freezer for 1 hour.
12. If using candy melts, follow instructions on the package to melt. If using white chocolate chips, follow the same microwaving instructions in step 2.
13. Working with just a few at a time, remove the cake pops from the fridge and dunk the cake pops into the melted chocolate until entirely covered. Pull out of the chocolate, twisting to maximize a smooth coating and let excess drip off back into the bowl, before sticking upright in styrofoam block. Once finished, let the cake pops sit for about 30 minutes for the coating to set.
14. Apply first a layer of pink food spray, then a layer of edible glitter to add a gleam.

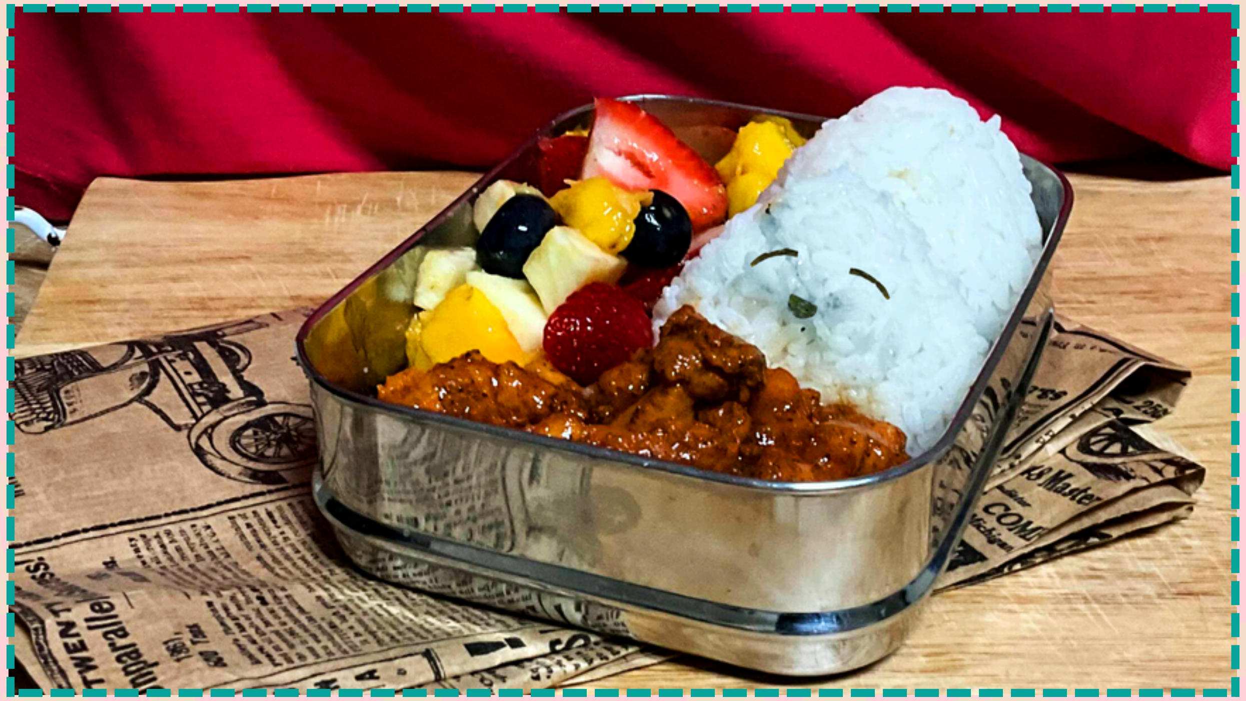
Notes/Substitutions: One box of cake mix and one can of pre-made frosting can help speed the process along and allow for flavor customization! Just follow the box instructions instead of steps 1-7 and then gradually add in frosting until reaching desired consistency (you may not need the whole can). The cake portion can also be substituted with a gluten free cake as well.

When it comes to decorations, if food spray and glitter are hard to find, pink candy melts or adding a bit of pink food coloring to white chocolate chips are a good substitute. If you prefer your jewels corrupted, the pink colors can be swapped out for dark purple.

Portal Maullante

Tohru's Bento

fruits basket



Ingredients

Honey BBQ Chicken

- Chicken Breast (700g)
- Olive Oil
- Salt and pepper (1 full tablespoon each)
- Minced Garlic (1 full tablespoon)
- Paprika (1 full tablespoon)
- Honey (¼ cup)
- BBQ Sauce (¼ cup)

Fruit salad:

- Apple (2 apples)
- Mango (1 Mango)
- Blueberries (1 cup)
- Strawberries (1 cup)
- Kiwi (3 kiwis)
- Honey (3 tablespoons)
- Vanilla extract (1 teaspoon)

Tohru's onigiri:

- Japanese Rice (1 cup)
- Nori Seaweed (1 or 2 sheets)
- Salt (½ tablespoon)
- Sugar (1 tablespoon)

Equipment

Stove, Pan, Bowl, and Knife.

Tohru's Onigiri

1. Measure the sushi rice, wash it, rinse it, and cook it.
2. Transfer the rice to a large sheet pan or similar and spread it out.
3. Sprinkle in the seasonings, feel free to experiment with proportions and even add new spices to your liking.
4. Mix everything together by folding the rice over onto itself, spread it out again, and leave it to cool to room temperature.
5. To make the onigiri, simply take some rice with a spoon and place it into a mold, a piece of plastic wrap, or even use your hands to shape it (just make sure to wet them first, the rice is sticky!) and mold the rice into a triangle.
6. Cut some nori seaweed into a cute little face to go on top. Experiment with the expressions, make fun little faces!

Fruit salad

1. Wash the fruit and cut it into evenly sized pieces.
2. Add everything to a large mixing bowl, then add honey with a bit of vanilla extract and stir gently to mix.

Honey BBQ Chicken

1. Slice the chicken into bite sized cubes.
2. Add the garlic, pepper, salt, olive oil, and paprika.
3. Cook the chicken on medium heat for 6-8 minutes, or until it's golden brown.
4. Add the honey and BBQ sauce, mix well.

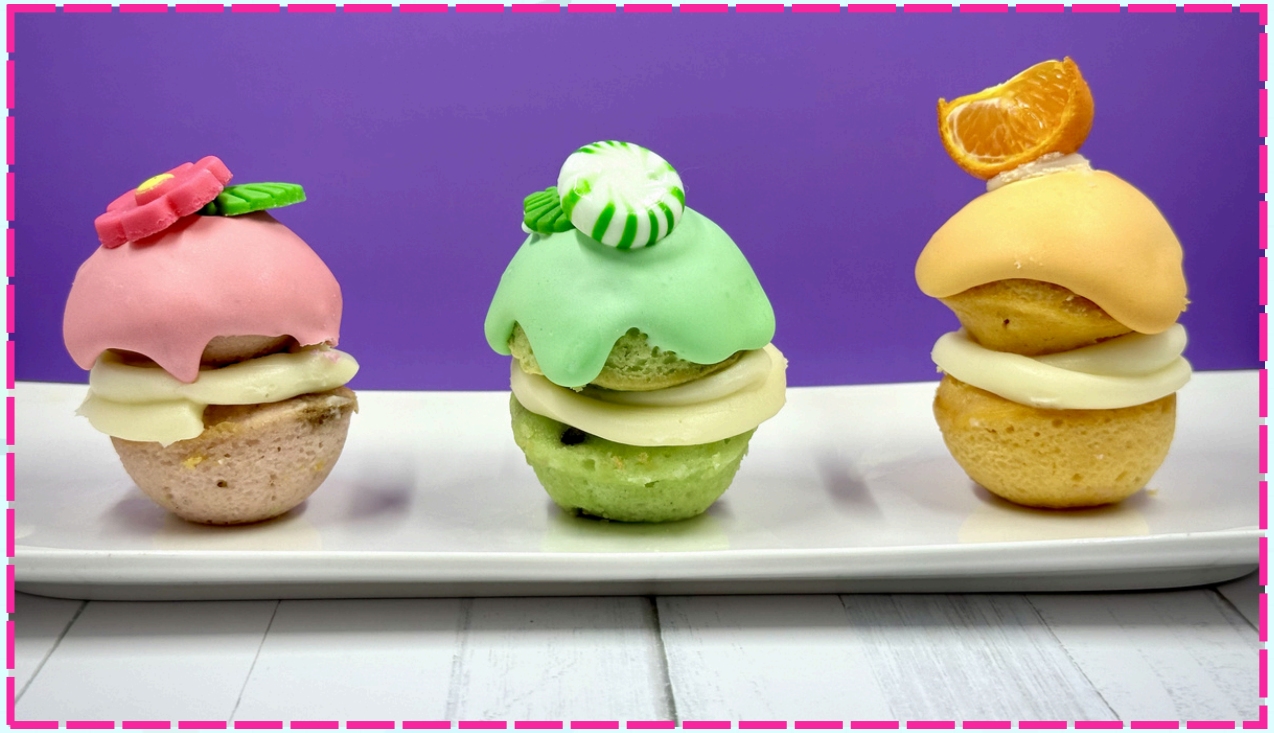
Notes/Substitutions: The fruit salad is very customizable so it's ideal for every kind of situation and preference, experiment with your favorite fruit! For the Honey BBQ chicken, the amount of spices listed on the ingredients list is a recommendation, feel free to modify to your taste.

Allergy Warnings:
None common, check ingredients list of foods.

Tuna

Poképuffs

pokémon



Ingredients

Cake

- 3 cups (360 g) all purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon (14 g) baking powder
- ½ teaspoon (2.84 g) salt
- 2 sticks softened, unsalted butter
- 1 ¼ cup (250 g) sugar
- 4 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) vanilla
- 1 ¼ cup (295 ml) whole milk
- 2 teaspoons (10 ml) extract
    - Mint: 2 teaspoons spearmint extract
    - Citrus: 2 teaspoons orange extract
    - Sweet: 1 teaspoon vanilla extract, 1 teaspoon strawberry extract

Icing:

- 3 egg whites
- 2 cups (240 grams) confectioners sugar
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) vanilla extract

Food Coloring

- Food coloring
    - Mint: green
    - Citrus: orange
    - Sweet: pink
- ¼ cup (50 g) mini chocolate chips (for mint cakes)

Buttercream Frosting

- 1 cup (227 g) butter, softened
- 3 cups (360 g) powdered sugar
- 3 tbsp (45 ml) heavy cream
- 1 tsp (5ml) vanilla extract
- Pinch of salt

Allergy Warnings:
Milk, Eggs

Equipment

Half Sphere Silicone Baking Mold (3" diameter) and Mixer

Cake

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit (175 degrees C).
2. In a medium bowl, combine flour, baking powder and salt.
3. In a separate larger bowl, beat butter and sugar together until light and fluffy.
4. Mix in eggs, one at a time, to the butter and sugar mixture.
5. Sift the flour mixture into wet ingredients, alternating with the milk.
6. Separate batter into three separate bowls, and add extract and food coloring to each bowl. Note: Add chocolate chips to the mint batter.
7. Pour batter into greased mold, leaving space at the top to give puffs room to rise.
8. Bake for 15 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean.
9. Cool completely before frosting and decorating.

Icing

1. In a large bowl, beat egg whites on medium low speed until frothy.
2. Mix in confectioners sugar and vanilla on low speed—confectioners sugar should be added gradually.
3. Increase speed to high and mix until peaks form in icing.
4. Divide frosting into 3 separate bowls and add food coloring to each.

Buttercream

1. In a large bowl, beat butter until smooth.
2. Gradually add powdered sugar until combined.
3. Mix in heavy cream, vanilla extract, and salt.

Assembly

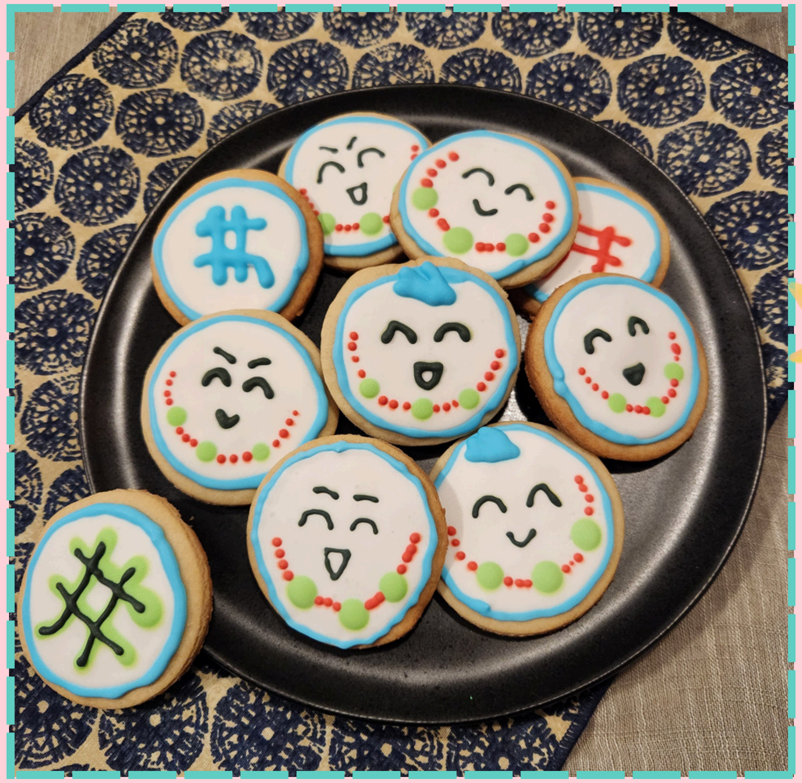
1. Divide cakes into 2 groups for each flavor (half will be coated in icing and be used as the top of the "sandwich" and half will be used as the bottom of the "sandwich"). On half of the cakes of each flavor, pour icing on the rounded side.
2. Mint: green icing
3. Citrus: orange icing
4. Sweet: pink icing
5. Allow icing to harden. This may take up to 8 hours. Leave the cakes in the fridge as the icing hardens.
6. On the second group of cakes (without icing), pipe out a spiral of buttercream frosting onto the flat side of each half-sphere cake.
7. Sandwich the iced cakes on top of the cakes with buttercream.
8. Note: If garnishing cakes with decals, add decals to the top halves before the icing dries. The icing will help the decals stick to the cakes.

Notes/Substitutions: when icing the top cakes, it is helpful to use a drying rack propped over parchment paper. This allows excess icing to drip off onto the paper, keeping the cakes looking tidy and the mess easy to dispose of.

Eialyne

Nom No Da

fushigi yuugi



White Chichiri's mask hides a tragic past, these masks hide a tasty interior! Buttery sugar cookies are decorated with sweet royal icing to capture the celestial warrior's trademark, easy-going expression.

Ingredients

- **227g softened butter**
- **200g sugar**
- **10ml vanilla extract**
- **1 egg**
- **360g flour**
- **3.5g salt**
- **2.5g baking powder**
- **blue, green, red and black food coloring**
- **260g cups powdered sugar**
- **1 egg white**
- **29.5ml lemon juice**
- **water**

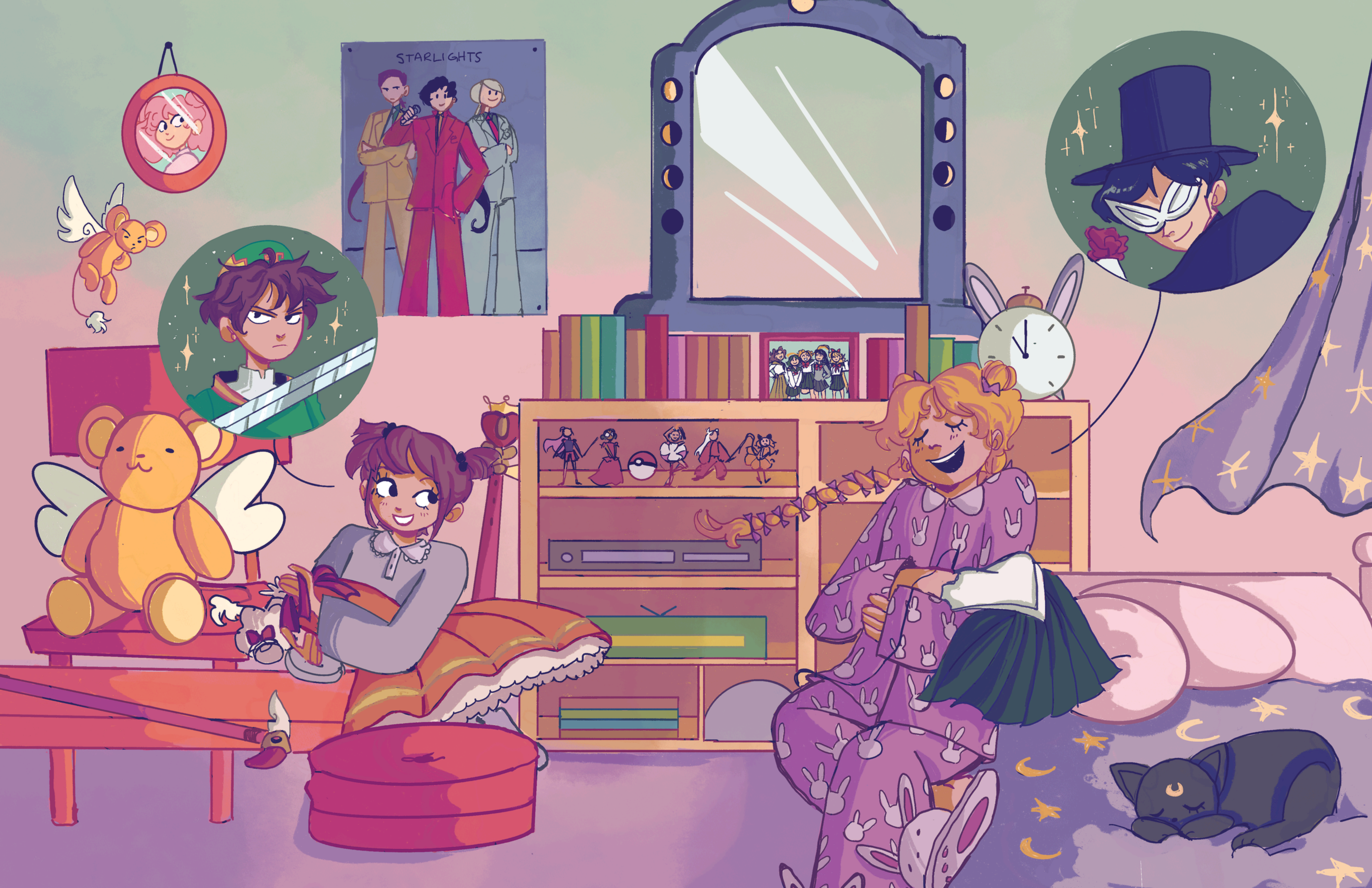
Equipment

- **Stand or hand mixer**
- **Baking sheet**
- **Silicone mat or parchment paper**
- **Small bowls (at least four)**
- **Piping bags or plastic ziplock bags**
- **Rolling pin**
- **Circle shaped cookie cutter**

Notes/Substitutions: An upside down glass works in a pinch if a cookie cutter is not to be found. An alternative cookie recipe can also be used (especially if gluten-free), so long as it results in a flat top that is ideal for icing. If your cookies seem not quite flat enough for icing, you can press a spatula gently against the top of them when they are fresh out of the oven.

Allergy Warnings:
Dairy, Egg, Flour

1. Cream butter and sugar using mixer.
2. Add egg and vanilla until well incorporated.
3. Mix together dry ingredients and add to the mixing bowl, a little bit at a time, until dough is smooth.
4. Roll dough out to about a quarter of an inch, then cut out circles using a cookie cutter. Unused dough can be merged and rolled back out to minimize waste.
5. Place cookies on mat/parchment-lined baking sheet or plate before placing in the fridge to chill for 1 hour.
6. Preheat oven to 350F and if cookies are not yet already on a baking sheet prepare one with mat/paper.
7. Make sure cookies are laid out about 1 inch apart on baking tray before baking for 12-15 minutes, or until golden brown around the edges. Multiple baking trays may be needed depending on the size of cookie cutter used.
8. Remove cookies from oven and let cool completely on a wire rack before moving to the next step.
9. Add powdered sugar, egg white and lemon juice to mixing bowl and mix on a slow speed until everything is well blended. Gradually raise the speed until it's reached high, and beat an additional 3 minutes, until stiff peaks form.
10. Add water 2.5ml at a time, stirring well between additions until the texture resembles that of toothpaste. This will be your "thick" icing.
11. Remove about ¼ of the icing from the mixing bowl and divide it up evenly between three small bowls. To each small bowl, add one of each green, red and black food coloring and mix well.
12. Remove another ¼ of the icing from the mixing bowl and place it in another bowl, coloring it with the blue food coloring.
13. Add water 2.5ml at a time to the remaining frosting in the mixing bowl (about ½ of the original amount) and stir until consistency is now similar to thick syrup. This will be a "thin" icing used for flooding. You can also thin some of the colored icing (either directly or split in half in order to have both) depending on how you want your cookies to look.
14. All icing types can now be added to piping bags. To decorate the cookies trim off extremely small points of the piping bags:
    Note: "Thick" icings are used for both the initial border and creating designs with a more 3D appearance. "Thin" is for flooding the cookie background and flat decorations.
    a. Trace an outline around the edge of the cookie using blue "thick" icing.
    b. Flood the inside of the circle with "thin" white icing by filling it from the middle about 2/3rds of the way. More icing can still be added if necessary, but to avoid over filling, use a chopstick or similar to gently push the "thin" icing towards the outside ring, until all gaps are filled.
    c. If a flat pattern is desired (the cookie has a smooth surface), immediately proceed with the following steps using the corresponding "thin" icing. For a more dimensional effect, let the cookies sit and harden for 2 hours before continuing.
    d. Using green icing, add 3 mid-sized dots along the edges of the cookie. Using red icing, place a string of smaller red dots in between the green.
    e. Using black icing, in the upper half of the cookie, draw two low arches for eyes and then much shorter arches or lines above those for eyebrows. A mouth can now be added between the arches and the earlier necklace design.
15. Once decorated, let cookies sit and harden for an additional 6 hours, at minimum.


STARLIGHTS

PiratePlunder

Bubblegum CRASH
Tokyo 2040

bubblegum crisis
tokyo 2040

implied
priss/linna

iImplications of PTSD, medication

“Knight Sabers, prepare for action,” Sylia flung open the door to her penthouse room with gusto. The familiar words were delivered with a wry smile, their contractor and colleague clearly relieved to be hosting them in a less hostile, less urgent situation.

Linna had to stop herself from whistling low, impressed by the majesty of the room–was that a pool? An aquarium? Were the fish real or simulated?–while Nene did nothing to reel in her awed squeals. Priss just walked in with a shrug, unphased as ever, as if she owned the place herself.

Had she been up here before? Priss seemed to have known Sylia for the longest of their group. She never let Linna or Nene in on anything about her past or her relationships. It was possible she’d been up to Sylia’s home before, but it was just as possible she kept Sylia at the same distance as the rest of them.

Linna wondered if the others were just as surprised as she was that their antisocial teammate had accepted Sylia’s call for an ‘Emergency team meeting sleepover.’ None of them commented on the strangeness of her being there outside of a Boomer emergency. Linna half-suspected Sylia had bribed the other woman to attend the social gathering, or perhaps reprimanded her over her treatment of Nene in their most recent missions.

Team cohesion was absolutely integral in life-or-death situations when all they had to rely on was each other. Priss’s constant derision of Nene’s physical skills and recent attempt to get her kicked off the team had backfired spectacularly. Nene acted like it was water off a duck’s back and like it didn’t matter, she’d proven her worth, and her usual upbeat attitude kept things smoothed over, but their boss had clearly seen a fracture in the team that would prove dangerous if not rectified.

Linna and Nene were just ecstatic to have a girl’s night. Nene’s eyes were lighting up as she looked at the silver trays of canapes, sushi, burgers and cakes displayed on the long dining table. Linna held a hand on her shoulder. Nene’s home’s disarray–tech, clothes and food everywhere–was on her mind, and she didn’t want her young friend to just dive in and make a mess in Sylia’s pristine apartment within the first minute of being there.

“Wow Sylia, you didn’t have to steam-clean everything for us,” Linna looked around in awe. There wasn’t even a fingerprint on the aquarium glass, nor speck of dust on the apartment’s chandelier crystal. “Your hospitality is so impressive.”

“Oh,” Sylia’s laugh was a regal thing. There was a twinkle of gratitude in her icy eyes. “Think nothing of it. I’m just glad to have the company! It’s always just like this. Henderson does an incredible job with cleaning up after me.”

“Mackie seems like the cleanest teenage boy ever,” Linna chuckled, freezing and realizing she’d made a mistake as soon she saw the tightening of Sylia’s jaw.

“He moved out recently,” Sylia sighed. “I just got my little brother back, and already he couldn’t wait to leave and do his own thing. Still, it’s for the best. Nigel’s taken him on as an apprentice and I can’t stand the thought of him dealing with those damn machines–”

Henderson gravitated to her side as her shoulders shook with barely contained anger, but Sylia just raised a hand and smiled tightly. “I’m fine Henderson. In fact, you should take the night off. No boys, no Boomers. Just girl talk.”

Henderson nodded with a bow, making himself scarce to leave, even if he was clearly reluctant to do so. Linna quickly asked him in a hushed whisper. “Has her relationship with her brother always been so tense?”

Henderson looked sadly at his employer. “I’ve known Mistress Sylia her entire life, and I never even knew she had a brother.”

God, no wonder Priss seemed to tolerate Sylia most. Despite Sylia's manners and affable flirtations, she was just as closed off and mysterious!

Thank god at least Nene was an open book, she thought, as she watched Nene discretely grab a pastry while she thought no one else was watching. Honestly, a great idea.

Priss shot Sylia a glance of concern, saying nothing. She put her hands behind her head and leaned against the wall as she watched them all like a hellbent hare ready to run.

"You don't have to talk if you don't want to, Priss," Sylia smiled, sensing her discomfort.

Priss pointedly looked away.

"Have," Linna floundered, trying to break the tension. "Have you lived in this penthouse long?"

"I've owned the building for a number of years now, since returning to Japan," Sylia hummed thoughtfully. "The tower was just convenient. For business, as a front, for the launch system. Only made sense to live in it. Speaking of front–I almost forgot. I have gifts for all you girls from the recent collection. I'll be right back."

"I didn't realize all our bonuses would be lingerie," Priss muttered with the shake of her head.

"She's like the boutique Batman–well, Batwoman," Nene cheered as Sylia went down the elevator to sort through the Silky Doll's stock.

"Batwoman is a different character. She's not a billionaire with a butler," Priss's rough voice was an unexpected addition. Linna and Nene looked between each other, utterly perplexed by Priss's knowledge of such a dorky pulp comic. Nene raised an eyebrow, wondering if perhaps Priss had been replaced by a Boomer replica during their latest fight without their knowledge. Priss, however weirded out by Nene's scrutiny, was too used to feigning apathy and detachment, just shrugged, staring them down to stop them asking more questions. "The boys in the band read a lot of trash in-between sets. Sometimes I read what they leave behind in the trailer."

Linna held a hand over her mouth, hoping Priss didn't see her smile. It was unusual for her to elaborate on anything in her personal life, and her defensiveness was almost cute.

Linna tried not to think about how Sylia had probably bribed Priss with her immense private fund to come tonight. A larger cut to spend time with her teammates.

"I heard your recent interview with the band–"

"Oh god," Priss grimaced. "I can't believe the guys made me the spokesperson."

"It was pretty embarrassing to listen to," Nene licked up the crumbs off her fingers.

Priss's glare was withering. Nene discretely hid behind Linna.

"I've been meaning to see you perform," Linna continued, smoothing things over.

"Even if you won't waive the cover charge for us," Nene muttered and Linna elbowed her.

"It was interesting to hear your creative process, speaking from someone not very creative. I was wondering how you met your bandmates? What drew you to them? I mean, you guys really rock. Hearing you guys on tv was like being hit by your hardsuit's knuckle-bombers. I was just wondering ..."

Truthfully, Linna wanted to ask her why her band was always advertised as Sekiria featuring Priss, as if she were separate from them and wanting to break off and run.

"They're loud and obnoxious. Could be worse, though. They're not too nosy in my business," Priss said pointedly. "They just let me sing and don't ask too many questions."

Linna suspected that getting into Priss's interior was like first getting into her hardsuit; cold at first, yet it had adjusted and warmed up to her body temperature overtime. At least, Linna hoped Priss wasn't truly as cold, impenetrable and hard as the Boomers they took down. The rebuffs stung, her defense an offense much like her direct fighting style, but Linna wasn't one to run away from a challenge.

Rather, towards it. Linna just smiled wryly, remembering their first meeting. Her refusal to stand down and continued pursuit of Priss had not only gotten her attention; Linna liked to believe it had gotten her respect.

Priss blinked. "What's with that smile?"

"Oh, nothing," Linna's smile boldly got wider.

" … You're not cute," Priss grumbled, kicking at the luxurious carpet underfoot.

Nene looked between them, confused at the interaction, but quick to defend her new best friend. "She's very cute, thank you very much. You're just mean."

Sylia thankfully returned before they could butt heads again. "Honestly, I leave for five minutes and you two are already fighting over something."

"Sylia, do you think Linna is cute?" Nene asked point-blank, drawing a battle line.

"Of course. She's gorgeous. Exquisite bone structure and an athletic body to die for. Why?"

"Because Priss doesn't think so," Nene glared.

Sylia laughed whole-heartedly. "Thy lady doth protest too much, especially as Linna was the one to catch her eye."

"As a partner," Priss argued, blushing hot as she realized what she'd said. "For Knight Saber missions. Not–anyway, Nene couldn't keep up. Linna chased me down on my bike on foot. In heels! She had the athleticism I–we–were after."

Linna searched her face in earnest. Even though Priss was looking away, face frowning and shut off, she meant every word.

"I'm glad we met," Linna said simply. "Even if you almost ran me over because you're a speedfreak."

"Wouldn't have happened if you weren't late for work," Priss shrugged.

"So my lack of rushing worked to my advantage," Linna grinned. "It led me to meeting you and the rest of the Knight Sabers and fulfilling my dream of making a difference as a part of you."

"Such a weird dream to want to be a vigilante to help people," Priss shook her head. "I don't get you."

"You don't have to get me to work with me," Linna relented, used to Priss's dismissive nature by now. "You gotta admit, I'm catching up to you on the field, too."

"I'd be disappointed if you weren't. I don't work with dead-weight."

"Maybe I'll be saving your arse one day," Linna sniffed, primly.

Linna's body ached with the amount of training she'd put into overtaking Priss as the top dog. She was excited by the amount of plush pillows Sylia had piled up in the living room, flopping into them with a full body flip and a tired sigh.

Sylia watched their interactions, mischievous smile in place. "It's good to see a bit of healthy competition. Oh, you ladies just keep pushing each other forward."

"And while they're not looking, I'll take the lead," Nene smiled, hoping not to be left behind. Her eyes widened as Sylia deposited a satin parcel in her hand. "What's this? A new body suit?"

"In a way," Sylia chuckled. "They're pajamas for the evening. I saw each of these makes and thought of you. I just wanted to spoil each of you."

Nene unrolled the set with an excited squeal. "Oh it's so cute!"

The pink satin chemise matched the color of her hardsuit's legs, with a cute strawberry embroidered at the centre. A paler pink tulle overlay looked like butterfly wings out the front and back.

"I'll pass on the gift, Sylia," Priss raised her hand in protest. "I brought my own. I don't think I'd be comfortable sleeping in an unfamiliar place in unfamiliar clothes."

"Aw, but you looked so adorable in the last outfit Sylia picked out for you," Nene teased, poking her tongue out.

Priss blushed, a vein ticking in her forehead. Linna snorted, remembering the unflattering pink number with red flower choker Sylia had gotten Priss into after Nene out-performed her on their last mission. A wager was a wager.

"And for our newest recruit," Sylia passed her a silky apricot number with a wink, Linna's eyes bulging at the dip of the neckline and lacy fabric in the brasserie.

"Are you sure about–"

Priss used the moment to dip out, returning in her usual evening wear of an oversized plain white singlet dress. Linna's jaw dropped at her unkempt beauty. Priss was all hard edges, split-end mullet and an aesthetic that said she didn't give a shit. How could she make everything so effortless? Linna was almost jealous, taking the package from Sylia with a hurried thanks to go get changed.

When she re-emerged, Sylia was setting up a gaming console.

"It's not a GENOM make, is it?" Priss glared at the technology distrustfully.

"Of course not," Sylia spat back, outraged. "It was an old pre-quake system from a long defunct company. It's quaint."

"I was hoping we could go down to the Pit instead," Priss said reluctantly. "Hook me up to that old simulator so I could go through the feedback of Linna's first solo Boomer kill."

Linna jolted, bringing their attention to her.

"Oh Linna, you look divine! That shade is just perfect on you. Brings out the color in your cheeks," Sylia clapped, ignoring Priss who was a flustered mess at being sprung wanting.

"It just doesn't seem fair," Priss grunted. "You got to experience one of my kills when we were trying you out. It's only fair I get to experience how your body moves from that perspective."

Linna could understand. Getting that inside look at Priss's moves during combat had felt intimate, experiencing her moves and rhythms as if Priss's body were her own. Learning Priss's instincts in a fight had given Linna a deeper understanding of her strengths and the way she thought. How much she hated the corrupted Boomers they came across, the speed at which her gauntleted hands tore through their biosynthetic bodies to rip out their cores without hesitation.

Still, she wasn't going to let Priss live down wanting to get to know her body like that.

"If you want, you could take me dancing," Linna winked and smiled with more confidence than she felt.

Priss asked Sylia if she needed help getting things set up.

Nene looked at Linna with a lifted brow, before quietly letting out an 'Oh' of recognition, shuffling over to whisper in her ear. "So that's why you asked me if Priss had a boyfriend or if she was …"

Linna elbowed her in the side in embarrassment, blushing hard.

"I'm serious. If I'd known, I never would have tried to set Priss up with Leon-poo–"

"Your co-worker at the A.D. Police?" Linna yelled louder than intended. The other women turned to her in alarm.

"Yes, we've let her know how insane and dangerous that was," Sylia said coldly.

"He's a nice guy–"

"You're the only person on the A.D. Policeforce who hasn't tried to kill us," Priss said dryly, putting her hand up when Nene tried to argue that wasn't true. "Save it. It's bad enough you have to work for them, and that Linna works that damn office job for that GENOM subsidiary–"

"We can't all be ideologically pure outsiders, Priss," Sylia laughed, trying to ease the tension. "Not in this economy."

"Says the woman with the Porsche," Priss scowled. "And the tower."

Sylia just shrugged. "Nene, do you want to be Princess Peach?"

"Now wait just a minute," Linna marched up to Priss, who took a step back as she jabbed her in the chest. "You think I like working under that Boomer manager and dealing with sleazy hiring reps and upper management making comments about my body and thighs being too muscular–"

Priss' eyebrows went to her hairline. "But your thighs are perfect–I mean. Sorry. Guess I've been a bigger asshole than usual."

"I'll forgive you," Linna picked up her controller, selecting a cute green and orange dino character that matched her hardsuit. "After I kick your ass."

Priss's shoulders relaxed as she turned to face the screen. "You're on."

Turns out, for all of Priss' skills as a biker, she kind of sucked at driving games. For someone who was so fast and direct in combat, that brutality did not carry over. Corners were her weakness. Her character would bash into walls and get turned around. Yet she was having fun, if that smile was anything to go by. She kept moving forward, and Linna admired that.

Linna's play style was more refined and precise. An all-rounder, speedy and dexterous. Unlike Priss, she didn't just blitz all her items at once, and used them strategically.

Sylia was tragically tunnel-visioned. She'd been in the lead, but as soon as one of the computer-generated racers hit her with a red-shell, she became enraged and spent less time trying to win the race and more time going after the machine enemies with her items.

Nene surprised them all. The item's queen. She hit Priss with a banana that saw her flying off the map in the final lap, grinning mischievously as she took the lead with a short-cut while Linna was busy going the highlighted route. Nene wasn't the fastest, however she was able to use the game to her advantage. When she crossed the line first, Priss was outraged.

"You totally hacked the game," Priss attempted to scowl, throwing her controller down dramatically. Her smile gave her away

Sylia was laughing even as she came in last. "I really needed this. Thank you girls for coming over."

Linna looked around, seeing the lightness of their posture, and smiled. They'd almost died last mission, their hardsuits drained by a monster that had been consuming Boomers and tech for breakfast. Sylia had been held in its claw, and Linna wasn't sure what she had seen or experienced, but she hadn't been the same since. Extra tense. She was glad she could give her boss this.

"Yes, good team bonding exercise, I think. Our team will be a well-oiled machine if we keep this up." Sylia smiled, gaze faraway as she murmured something only Linna who was sitting next to her could hear. "No one is going to die. Not this time"

They all ate until they were stuffed. Sylia retired to her bedroom, and the other Knight Sabers dogpiled on the ground in sleeping bags, Linna and Nene talking into the early hours of the morning with the occasional interjection from Priss.

Linna was awoken by the sound of a woman's scream. Heart jackhammering, she rolled up to her feet, ready to right whatever was wrong, stilling when she saw a sweat-drenched Sylia staggering through her bedroom door. Shaky hands went to the silver-covered dispensary on the bench, taking out several pills she swallowed dry.

Nene was dead to the world, somehow winding up upside down over her sleeping bag, snoring contently, and Priss was still there, rolled onto her front with music blasting in her headphones. Linna was the only one who saw their leader's vulnerability. They locked eyes, the startled, haunted look in Sylia's making her vow not to tell a soul.

"Nightmares?" Linna mouthed.

Sylia nodded. There was more Linna wanted to say. She wanted to console her. To make her know she got them too. To thank Sylia for stepping up and saving their lives when the A.D. Police had cornered and fired upon them. To tell her that she was beautiful in combat, if scary, and to ask her why she didn't fight on the front-lines these days.

Linna didn't want to pry. Not when Sylia had clearly gone through a lot.

She watched as the older woman stretched out, shrugging off her nightie and dressing gown as she made her way to her pool. Linna watched as she cut through the water, a silver bullet with seafoam hair trailing around her, jellyfish soft. Watching her swim was like watching her fighting in her hard-suit. Unrelenting pearly body fighting through the water like she was in her hardsuit, as if taking on the element would bring her peace of mind.

PERFECT
BY SATOSHI KON
say goodbye to the old you

PURE EVIL
KANG

SnailorBee

I Need to Feel the Touch of a Friend

yu yu hakusho **yusake/kurama**

mentions of parental neglect, cursing

Anger is familiar enough to Yusuke. The way it curls in his gut, boiling over into an unpleasant heat. The way it echoes through his skin, out towards his fingertips, making him itch for a fight.

Fighting will at least give him a relief from it all. The fury fades away into satisfaction as he feels the skin on his knuckles give way, as another fist hits his face or stomach, giving him something to feel besides the constant prick of his anger, sitting right under the skin.

A good fight has always been an escape; it's only when a fight is something lame or he can't find one that the anger dogs his every step without an outlet.

His mother brought a boyfriend home.

It shouldn't be surprising. It isn't, really, in the grand scheme of things. But she had promised, *promised* it would be different after his death, that she'd stop bringing around guys to the apartment.

Yusuke doesn't care what she does in her free time, just as long as it's *out* because his mom has shit taste in men. Bringing them home just brought trouble—for Yusuke and for them.

But for a while, she'd stuck to that promise. Long enough for Yusuke to get comfortable, thinking he'd be able to sleep in his own room without having to overhear something disgusting through their too-thin walls.

And yet, here he is, prowling the streets, hands buried deep in his pockets as he grinds his teeth and randomly swears at nothing.

Kicking a rock hard enough for it to bounce off the side of a building, Yusuke glances up, finally taking in his surroundings.

He's in a nicer area than he's expecting. Normally, his feet gravitate towards the more seedy sides of town, places he's familiar with. Instead, he finds himself in a pleasant neighborhood.

Yusuke considers the row of apartments with a contemplative look. He recognizes where he's at, and he wonders if he should stop by or just leave it…

With a shrug, Yusuke decides that he may as well lean into being annoying, hopping over the concrete fence and ducking down a narrow space between the apartment buildings, now fully focused on a goal.

It only takes a few minutes to end up in front of Kurama's place. Fingering a few small rocks that he pocketed on the way, Yusuke makes sure to control his strength as he starts peppering the lit window on the second story of the small condo.

He doesn't think it's Kurama's mom's room since it faces the street, and it's late enough that only a teenager (or party animal he thinks with a grimace) should be up.

Or alternatively, a 1000-or some old fox demon posing as a teen.

Same difference really.

It only takes a couple of rocks before the curtains part. Yusuke forces a wide grin, shoving his hands into his pockets as he leans back onto his heels.

When Kurama opens the window, Yusuke calls out, "Fancy meetin' you in a place like this!"

Kurama blinks back at him, face blank but pleasant. Not surprised or upset at Yusuke's sudden appearance.

"Oh Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?" Kurama says back, voice milder than Yusuke's own but still loud enough to drift through the quiet of the night between them.

He quirks a brow. “Eh?”

“Deny thy father and refuse thy name. Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, and I’ll no longer be a Capulet.”

“What the fuck?” Yusuke says, confused by the random use of jumbled-up English that sounds maybe like poetry.

Kurama chuckles, then drops his voice to a whisper. “Say, ‘Shall I say more, or shall I speak at this?’”

Still thoroughly perplexed, Yusuke tries, in a horribly accented English. He’s sure he completely butchered it, but Kurama laughs outright this time, and something about it partly settles the buzzing anger he can still feel so he lets it go.

Instead, he starts to scale a convenient tree that is in the front yard up towards the window. Kurama leans his cheek against the palm of his hand, elbow propped up on the sill, green eyes tracking his movements until they’re eye-to-eye.

They stare at each other for a few seconds, saying nothing. Yusuke frowns at him. “You gonna invite me in or what, fox boy?”

”Oh, were you wanting inside? My apologies, come in,” Kurama says in a silky voice, taking a step back, and somehow sounding polite but still with an undercurrent of insincerity.

Yusuke snorts but doesn’t bother calling him out for his tone. Kurama can argue better than anyone and although Yusuke loves a good fight, Kurama’s verbal spars always end up making him feel like the loser without even realizing what exactly he’s lost.

Ducking his head, Yusuke easily jumps into Kurama's room, landing lightly on his toes. Standing up, he takes a look around.

It's a fairly normal room. The bed is tucked into the corner next to the window, with a bedside table next to it. On the other wall is a desk, papers still littering its surface. A bookcase, neatly organized, and a closet door. All things considered, it feels more like a guest room than an actual teen's room. Though there are *some* belongings neatly organized, most of the surfaces are bare.

Yusuke turns to Kurama, who has returned to his seat. "Aren't you supposed to be pretending to be a teenager? What is this?" He waves a hand at the room. Kurama cocks a brow at him, leaning against the back of his chair.

"What do you mean? I *am* a teenager. This is my room."

Wrinkling his nose, he gives it another once over. Besides a few framed (framed!! Not just taped up!) photographs of a younger Kurama and his mom, the walls are completely empty. He snorts, collapsing onto the edge of the bed so violently that the springs squeal in protest at his weight. "If you say so."

"Why, what should I have in here?" Kurama asks mildly like the answer doesn't really interest him either way, but he's willing to humor Yusuke.

"Posters. Or at least something, I dunno, ripped out from some magazines. Some clothes laying around. It's too small for a TV in here, but you could fit a stereo. Maybe some dirty magazines. Or is there something like that under the bed?" Leaning between his legs, he looks, but it's disturbingly clean, with absolutely nothing under there. Boring.

Kurama is smiling when he comes back up, just the slightest curl at the corners of his lips but for some reason, it makes Yusuke blush. He opens his mouth to say something cutting, thinking that Kurama is laughing at him when he speaks before Yusuke can, "Is there a reason you've decided to come over?"

Instantly, Yusuke's mood sours further with the reminder. He scowls, rubbing his palms against the fabric of his jeans on his knees. "My mom," he practically growls, "decided to bring over her new *boyfriend*." The word is spat out with obvious disdain.

"I see," Kurama replies. Yusuke jumps up to his feet, pacing back and forth in the small room like a caged animal.

"I don't *care* about whichever loser she decides to 'date'." Emphasis on the word date, since his mother doesn't so much as date as 'sleep around and get bought drinks until she gets bored of them'. "It's just—" He stops, standing with his back to Kurama, facing the closed door, his hands balled up in fists by his sides. "She's not supposed to bring 'em back to our place." *To our home. Where I am. Where I don't want to hear my mother get drunk and fucked.*

“Do you want to spend the night?” Kurama asks. Yusuke whirls around with surprise.

"Huh?"

"You can spend the night if you want," Kurama repeats. "I'm almost done. You just have to be quiet because my mother is sleeping."

There's nothing else. No apologies or pity for Yusuke's situation. Just a cut-and-dry invitation that is stated in such a way that Kurama doesn't seem like he actually cares if Yusuke stays or goes.

It's instantly relieving, and he feels the tension in his body loosen. He hates being pitied more than anything and if he had caught even a shred of it, Yusuke would have left immediately.

He fakes a casual shrug. "Well, if you're offerin', sure."

Without saying anything else, Kurama turns back to his desk to continue his homework.

After taking off his shoes, Yusuke putters about the room for a few minutes, poking at the bookshelf, then opens the closet door to peer at the neat line of clothes hung up. Quickly, he grows bored and wanders over to hover at Kurama's shoulder.

The math neatly laid out on the page makes his brain feel like it's leaking out of his ears.

"You can understand that?" he asks with an exaggerated look of disgust.

Kurama hums under his breath, pencil flying as he writes out a long stream of numbers. "It's not that hard, I'm sure you could manage it if you tried."

Yusuke scoffs. "Not everyone's as smart as you, fox boy," he dismisses easily.

Emerald green eyes lock onto his, making him flinch back at their unexpected closeness, their noses almost brushing against each other before he pulls away. "I'm clever, but math doesn't need you to be clever. As long as you follow the rules, there's always a solution." Yusuke buries his hands into his pockets, casting a skeptical glance at the other teen's homework.

"Not really one for followin' the rules," he mumbles, a little embarrassed though he doesn't quite know why.

Kurama just shoots him a little knowing look. "No, I suppose not," he agrees.

Yusuke watches as he pushes some of his long red hair behind an ear. It's so thick it immediately falls forward again, and Kurama frowns.

"Isn't that annoying to deal with?" he asks. At Kurama's questioning glance, he clarifies, "Your hair. It's so long, I don't know how you stand it."

"You don't think it makes me look pretty?" Kurama tilts his head at Yusuke and if he didn't know better, he'd swear the fox was flirting with him. Yusuke narrows his eyes, trying to work it out.

The other is a masterclass at messing with people, and Yusuke is no exception. It doesn't feel out of the realm of possibilities for Kurama to flirt just to fuck with him. Yet, even as he thinks that he wonders at it too.

On the rare occasions Yusuke has seen Kurama be 'Shuichi' in front of others, he's suave and cool, always surrounded by plenty of fans, but also very distant. No way he flirts with others, or else his fans would eat each other alive for his attention.

So, while yes, Kurama might be flirting with Yusuke just to mess around, it also feels slightly out of character for some reason he can't quite place. Before he can figure it out, Kurama interrupts his whirling thoughts.

"I've always had long hair. In my Yoko Kurama form, it was even longer. For a while growing up, I kept it short, but I found I didn't like it. I feel… more myself like this."

It's a small thing, a tiny detail that shouldn't matter, overall. But Yusuke feels like it's an important piece of the puzzle that makes up Kurama. A peek behind the curtain that he doesn't let just anyone see.

"Want me to braid it back?" The question is out of his mouth before Yusuke is even conscious that he asked it. His face flames up in a blush as Kurama's eyebrows shoot up in surprise. Before he can take it back, Kurama opens a drawer in his desk, digging in quickly before holding up a single hair tie.

"Would you? I'd like that," Kurama says, staring at him with sudden intensity. Embarrassed, though not quite sure why—he did offer after all—he grabs the hair tie, positioning himself behind Kurama.

They don't talk as Yusuke, without access to a comb, uses his fingers to draw Kurama's hair back. It's thick and soft, sliding like velvet through his fingers.

It doesn't take long for Yusuke to braid the hair and when he finishes, he scowls at the results. It's off-kilter and overly loose.

Kurama touches it and makes a pleased hum regardless.

For some reason, Yusuke doesn't get antsy as he lingers around Kurama's room. The anger is hardly there either, blown away in the face of Kurama's pretend apathy, like feathers in the wind.

Yusuke knows it's fake; why let Yusuke stay here if not because Kurama wants to help? But unlike most, Kurama seems to know that Yusuke can't just *accept* a handout. For all that he's usually straightforward, Yusuke is aware that sometimes certain things dig at him the wrong way. It's nice that Kurama apparently understands that.

Soon enough, Kurama finishes his work and gets them ready for bed. A change of clothes for Yusuke, then, pressing a finger to his lips to show that Yusuke should be silent, leading him to the bathroom where they have an extra, unopened toothbrush under the sink.

They stand together, side by side, arms knocking into one another as they brush their teeth. Kurama not so subtly turning to see the braid from different angles in the mirror.

He feels the back of his neck go hot as he watches, but Yusuke doesn't bring himself to say anything about it.

Once they get back to the bedroom, Yusuke thinks he'll be given the floor but somehow, he finds himself on a bed that is definitely too small for two teenage boys, without knowing exactly how he got there.

Kurama rolls towards him, cushioning a hand underneath his cheek. Yusuke does the same, and they stare at each other in the dark. He can just make out the edges of Kurama's face illuminated by the streetlights that shine in through the edges of the curtains and wonders if Kurama can see better than he can, or if his eyes are like a human's too.

He decides not to ask. "You didn't have to keep the braid in, you know," he says gruffly. "I know it's shitty."

"I like it," Kurama says, with zero shame, the jerk. "My mother hasn't done my hair in a while."

Yusuke makes a face. "Can't you just ask?" They seem like they have that sort of relationship. Hell, Kurama was willing to die for his mom, it shouldn't be that hard to ask for her to do his hair, right?

The fox demon chuckles. "I suppose I could. I just figured teen boys don't want their mothers playing with their hair." Yusuke doesn't miss the way that Kurama doesn't quite meet his eyes at that, as if he's embarrassed by the notion that he'd like it.

"Oi." Yusuke reaches out to flick Kurama's forehead. "Haven't you lived for like, a stupid amount of time? What does age matter to you? You've always been her son, even when you've had memories that proved that you were much older than her. Why is it you get a couple more human years in you and suddenly you don't want her mothering? S'not like you're asking her to do something weird, like change your clothes or whatever. It's just hair."

Kurama's eyes are wide before he laughs, raising a hand to cover his mouth, trying to smother the sound. He curls into himself slightly, knees knocking into Yusuke's legs.

He pouts. "Hey, what's so funny?" Yusuke demands, wiggling closer. He grabs Kurama's hand, tugging it away from his face. It exposes Kurama's wide smile, and the sight makes Yusuke freeze, his heart skipping a beat at the soft expression Kurama gives him.

Then, Kurama lunges forward, brushing his lips against Yusuke's, the touch whisper soft. He pulls back before Yusuke can even hope to react with a hint of mischief in that smile.

"Thanks, Yusuke," Kurama says. "I'll keep that in mind. Should we get to sleep?"

"W-what, but you—"

"Yes?" Kurama sounds amused as he watches Yusuke sputter.

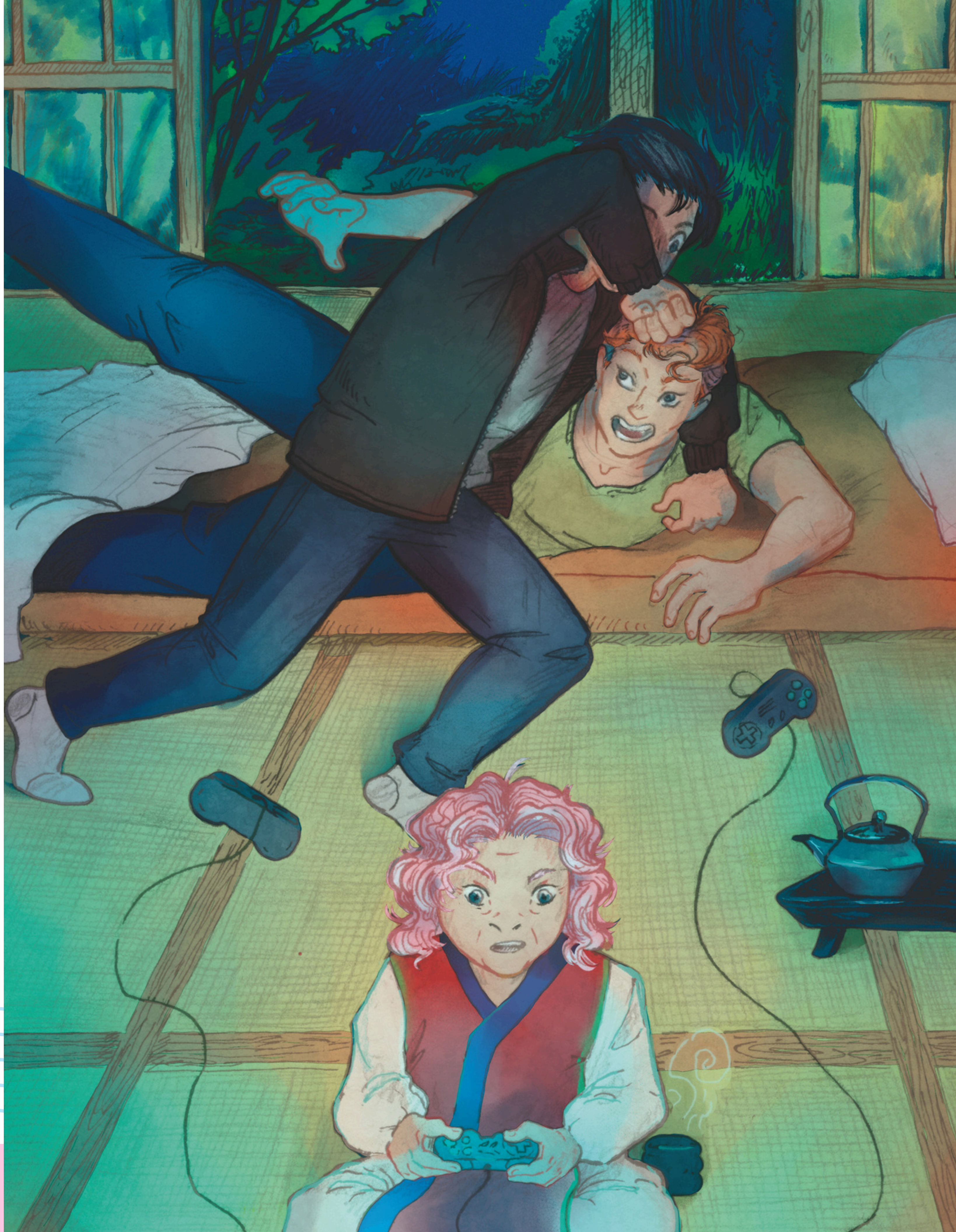
"*You kissed me!*" Yusuke manages to hiss.

Kurama looks entirely unphased. "Should I not have?" Yusuke gapes at him, mind struggling to figure out what the hell is going on.

Then, Yusuke snaps and he lets out a growl before tackling Kurama, forcing him on his back while Yusuke sits on top of him. Despite knowing that Kurama could definitely fight him off, the fox demon does no such thing, just stares back at him with an elegant eyebrow cocked. He fists the front of Kurama's shirt, making sure that even if he wanted to, he wouldn't be able to move without bringing Yusuke with him.

"Do it better than that!" Yusuke demands before he swoops down.

Kurama gets one last laugh out before Yusuke swallows the sound with his mouth.



Wham, Glam, Thank You Ma'am

sailor moon

sailor scouts

Michiru's opportunity for escape has passed the instant Usagi sees her being led down the stairs by Usagi's mother. She meets Michiru halfway up, throwing her arms around her and nearly forcing her off-balance. "Michiru! You made it!"

It's awkward, and Michiru isn't exactly sure of the protocol for a reaction, but it's nice to feel so welcomed, so…wanted. There had been a long internal debate in front of the full-length mirror in her bedroom before she left home about whether anyone really wanted her there and whether she would be any fun if they did.

All of her doubts seem silly in hindsight when she receives a warm greeting from everyone who is already here. Rei and Minako both get up from the floor and offer to help with her bag, which she politely declines. Makoto stands and offers her seat on the sofa, which is also politely turned down. Ami, also sitting on the couch, slender legs pulled to her chest, gives Michiru a bashful smile when their eyes meet, and Michiru is already comforted to know that she's not the only one feeling nervous. Michiru hasn't known her for long, but from what she has gathered about Ami, she is probably in turmoil over taking a one-night break from studying.

Michiru sits awkwardly on the floor near the door, her duffel bag within arm's reach in case she needs to make a quick getaway. Breathe, she reminds herself. *It's only a sleepover.* She's performed in packed concert halls, but now she feels shy?

The attention gradually shifts away from her, the other girls talking about boys from their school. Michiru loves the Mugen Academy—it's one of the best high schools in the country—but she can't help but feel a bit left out and jealous that she has no frame of reference for anything the others are discussing. Fingers curling in the shag carpet rug, she tries to school her features so that she doesn't seem so aloof. She quietly panics, knowing that she hasn't known this group long enough for them to understand that her silence doesn't imply superiority—she's just…awkward in social settings.

Her spiraling train of thought is derailed by the doorbell ringing. About thirty seconds later, sneakers appear, descending to the basement one step at a time, followed by impossibly long legs half-covered by loose, knee-length shorts, and then—

"Haruka!" Usagi leaps out of the armchair she had been lying across to greet her at the bottom of the stairs.

"Hey, Odango."

Usagi's cheeks darken a bit at the nickname, and Michiru's eyes narrow. Catching herself quickly, she glances around and smooths her features into something less petulant. With a duffel bag slung over her shoulder and her hair tousled from the wind, Haruka is, as always, the picture of effortless cool. Her dark blue eyes scan the room, lighting up when they land on Michiru, whose heart speeds up a bit, any lingering anger dissolving like cotton candy on her tongue.

Everyone takes their turn greeting Haruka and is acknowledged in return, but Haruka wastes no time in making her way over to where Michiru is sitting on the floor, tossing her bag to the side and settling in beside her. "Why are you all the way over here by your lonesome?"

"I…" Michiru folds the hem of her knee-length skirt. "I don't want to be in the way."

"You could never. Hey, do you think—"

Minako claps her hands together loudly. "Time for makeovers!"

Usagi and Rei cheer and delegate themselves to be the group stylists. Usagi tugs on Ami's arm until she gives in, while Rei hones in on Makoto. This leaves Michiru and Haruka in the care of Minako, who bounces over with a glittery pink box full of supplies. "Who wants to go first?" she asks excitedly.

Haruka tilts her head toward Michiru. "She's all yours."

Michiru smiles and doesn't object when Minako pushes her hair back with a headband and sets to work painting her face. When she's done, Minako beams at Haruka. "Well, what do you think? Doesn't she look good?"

"She does." Haruka is looking directly at Michiru, her gaze much softer than usual. "But there's really not much you could have done to make *Michiru* look bad."

Michiru is grateful for the layers of concealer and powder, which are hopefully enough to cover the blush rising up her neck. She compliments Minako's work as she checks her reflection in a mirror. Her eyes are shadowed with purple glitter that compliments the turquoise of her hair, and the bright red hue of her lips adds an air of maturity that she rather likes.

"Your turn!" Minako sets her sights on Haruka, who seems surprised by the sudden attention.

"That's alright. I'm not much into makeup."

"But a sleepover's no fun without makeovers," Minako says with a slight pout.

"You should do it," says Michiru. "You can always wash it off afterward."

Haruka's shoulders slump. Uncharacteristically self-conscious, she lowers her gaze and asks, "But what if I…look like a clown?"

"Don't be silly," Michiru urges. "You'll look great no matter what."

Haruka meets her eye and seems to weigh whether or not she's telling a lie. "Alright, Minako. Do your worst."

The headband that held back Michiru's hair is transferred to Haruka, and Minako's posture takes on a serious air. When she's finished, Michiru is honestly surprised by her restraint and subtlety. Whereas she gave Michiru a bold, glam look, she's used nude colors that accentuate Haruka's naturally beautiful eyes, and her contouring exaggerates the sharp angles of her bone structure. Haruka looks like she could be a model.

Mistaking Michiru's awed silence for something else, Haruka laughs at her reflection. "Oh, god. I *do* look like a clown."

"Hey!" Minako cries. "Don't insult my work!"

"You look beautiful," Michiru says shyly. The grin runs from Haruka's face, and Michiru fears that she's made her uncomfortable. "I mean, not in a…weird way. You just—you look—"

"Thank you." Haruka's smile is softer this time, more genuine. It warms something inside Michiru that she didn't realize was frozen.

"I'm glad you like it!" Michiru jumps slightly at the sound of Minako's voice, almost having forgotten she was present. "Who wants to do *my* makeup?"

"Dibs!" Usagi yells as she puts the finishing touches on a rather amateurish attempt at a smokey eye on Ami.

Minako scoops up her makeup toolbox and settles herself on a pillow on the floor next to Ami and Usagi, leaving Michiru and Haruka alone in their corner of the basement. Michiru forces herself to look anywhere other than Haruka's perfect face, her gaze landing on Rei, who is having her hair braided by Makoto. Even without looking, she can *feel* Haruka staring at her.

"Do you want me to braid your hair?" Haruka asks suddenly.

Michiru considers for a moment before slowly nodding. Haruka moves behind and gathers her hair into a low ponytail, her warm fingers brushing the nape of Michiru's neck. Suppressing a shiver, Michiru keeps her eyes forward. "I'm surprised you know how to braid."

Haruka hums, letting Michiru's hair fall once more around her shoulders. "I didn't cut the hair off *all* my dolls."

She picks up a section of hair at the front of Michiru's hair and separates it into three pieces. Michiru begins to relax, lulled by her magic fingers.

"I didn't think you would be the type that played with dolls," Michiru admits.

Haruka exhales a chuckle. "I preferred monster trucks and dinosaurs, but I had a few. I knew I was gay when I straight-up ignored the Ken doll and had the Barbies make out with each other."

Michiru tries her best not to seem surprised by the admission. She's always had her suspicions, but Haruka never really seemed interested in dating anyone, regardless of gender.

"Oh," Michiru says, a bit dumbly.

A few minutes pass, and Michiru doesn't even mind the occasionally sharp tug on her hair. Anything, as long as it's Haruka's skillful hands touching some part of her. All too soon, she hears the snap of a hair tie looping around the end, holding the braid in place. A mirror appears in front of Michiru's face, and she admires Haruka's handiwork, impressed by the symmetry.

Her eyes find Haruka's in the mirror. "You do good work," she offers with a smile.

An expression flits across Haruka's face, too complicated for Michiru to put a name to. She ducks her head and mutters, "Thanks."

After everyone has been made-over, they take turns oohing and ahhing over each other's new looks. The long bangs framing Usagi's bangs have been curled into spirals, and Haruka playfully tugs on one while giving her verdict: "Beautiful."

The temperature of the room seems to rise, but Michiru is the only one to notice it. Usagi chatters on in a chipper, immature voice, and has her voice always been this grating? Michiru doesn't understand why she feels a sudden, urgent need to make Tsukino Usagi *shut the f*ck up*.

Whoa.

Haruka turns back to Michiru, and her head tilts in confusion at whatever face she is making. "Are you—"

"Rei!" The name comes out of Michiru's mouth far too loud, and the whole group turns toward her.

Rei blinks a couple of times. "Yes?"

"Uh..." God, Michiru is an idiot. Maybe if she closes her eyes, the ground will swallow her and everyone present will forget she ever existed. "Your eyeshadow looks really pretty. Gold is a great color on you."

"Isn't it?" Rei bats her fake eyelashes. "Makoto is a genius! I'm going to start wearing this color every day."

Michiru breathes an internal sigh of relief now that the attention has been pulled away from her. Usagi pulls out a box of magazines and distributes scissors, glue sticks, and colorful construction paper.

Michiru has never made a collage before, but it's surprisingly fun. At first, she tries to coordinate her colors and line things up neatly, but the different font types and sizes make it impossible to be perfect, which is...oddly freeing. The final product—a mishmash of pictures and text that caught Michiru's eye, with her name spelled out in huge, mismatched letters in the center—isn't as polished as a painting or sculpture she would make in her art class at school, but Michiru has every intention of hanging it on her wall the instant she goes home tomorrow morning.

Haruka, who has been diligently working on her own collage, peeks over Michiru's shoulder. "Looks nice. It's very...you."

"Is that a bad thing?" Michiru asks. She glances over at Haruka's work, which is mostly made up of photos of fast-looking cars and motorbikes cut from magazines addressed to Usagi's father. It's even messier than Michiru's work, which only adds to the charm.

"No, of course not." Haruka lightly shoves Michiru's shoulder. "It was meant to be a compliment."

"Oh...thank you."

Once everyone has finished, they sit in a circle and take turns showing off their work. When it's Haruka's turn, Usagi crawls over quickly on hands and knees to get a closer look, taking the collage into her own hands. "That is so *cool*! I didn't know something so pretty could be made from Dad's car magazines!"

"Thanks, Little Bunny," Haruka says with a flirtatious smile. "Maybe your dad could use a son-in-law."

"Oh, stop it," Usagi huffs, not taking it to heart in the slightest.

This exchange doesn't make Michiru angry in the slightest. Nope. Not at all.

She definitely doesn't privately cheer for Rei ten minutes later when she is attempting to smother Usagi with a pillow.

Minako attempts to pull Rei off of Usagi, and when that doesn't work, she asks the group in a slightly panicked voice, "Who wants to play Truth or Dare?!"

"Oh! Me, me, me, me, me!" Usagi wriggles out from beneath the pillow. The painstakingly crafted hairdo Ami crafted is now a frizzy mess, the makeup she applied smeared to ruin.

Usagi drags the back of her hand across her mouth and doesn't bat an eye at the crimson streak that runs from the base of her thumb to her wrist.

Minako and Rei usher everyone into a circle. Settling in beside Haruka, Michiru isn't sure how to feel. She's never played Truth or Dare, but she's heard enough about it from books and movies to know that it will be hard to come out of it without being embarrassed. She'll just pick Truth whenever it's her turn and hope that she doesn't get asked anything *too* humiliating.

Usagi drums her thighs excitedly. "Okay! I'll pick who goes first! No, wait! I want to go first! Someone! Quick! Ask me, 'Truth or dare?!'"

"I'll do it," Rei says with a smirk that makes Michiru almost feel bad for Usagi. "Truth or dare?"

"Hmm..." Usagi taps her chin thoughtfully, her face scrunched up as she deliberates. "Uh...I'm not sure which to choose..."

"You wanted to be picked!" Based on looks alone, Michiru thinks that Rei is going to pick up another pillow to finish the job she abandoned earlier. "Just pick something already!"

Usagi hurries to blurt, "Dare!" Then, "No, wait! Truth!"

"Final answer?" asks Minako.

"Uh..." Usagi's brow furrows once more. "I... Yes! Truth!"

A slow smile creeps over Rei's face. With Ami in between them, she attempts to lean into Usagi's space. Ami leans out of her way.

"Well, then," Rei says slowly. "Tell us: Do you have a crush on Mamoru?"

A pink flush creeps up from Usagi's neck. "No—what?! I—"

"No lying," Rei reminds her.

Usagi chokes and sputters for about a minute before admitting in a tiny voice. "Yes."

Everyone but Haruka, who is sitting on Michiru's left, lets out an "Aww..."

Usagi flails as if she could bat the cooing away with her hands. "Yeah, yeah, whatever! That means it's my turn to pick someone! And I pick...Minako!"

Fidgeting with the hem of her nightgown, Minako tries not to look too embarrassed. "Okay, then. Truth."

Makoto and Rei groan. "*Boring*."

"Leave her alone," Ami chides gently. "There's two choices for a reason."

Leaning forward, Usagi squints at Minako as though sizing her up. "Hm... Then, tell us the truth: Have you ever been kissed?"

With seven pairs of eyes on her, Minako's face flushes. "...Yes."

Four girls squeal at the revelation. "Wait!" Usagi cries. "Now you have to tell us how many boys you've kissed!"

"No, I don't!" Minako protests. "It's one question per round, and I've already answered! Now, Makoto... Truth or dare?"

Fearless Makoto grins. "*Dare*."

"Oh..." Minako's face falls a bit. "Okay, then... I...can come up with a dare..."

"Make her call that boy she likes!" Usagi suggests. "Or make her call our math teacher and tell her that—"

"Shush!" Rei reaches around Ami to smack Usagi on the back of the head. "It's up to Minako to decide."

"Ow!" Rubbing the back of her head, Usagi pouts. "That was uncalled for!"

"Okay, okay, okay!" Minako clears her throat. "Makoto. I dare you…to drink an entire can of soda in one go!"

Usagi and Rei seem a bit disappointed, while Ami looks relieved. Minako hops up and runs over to the snack pile to grab a red can of cola, which she hands over to Makoto.

There's a crack and a hiss as the can is opened, and then, glancing around at everyone who is watching her, Makoto chugs the whole can.

She tilts the can sideways, and nothing comes out. "See? All done! I… Oh, no…" Falling back onto her bottom, she drops the can and wraps both hands around her belly, her face twisting in discomfort. Everyone watches with concern as she fidgets, and then…

A long, loud belch rumbles from her mouth. Makoto covers her mouth as everyone laughs at her, and, after breathing a sigh of relief, she joins them. Then, it's her turn to pick a victim.

For the first round, almost everyone picks Truth. Other than Makoto, Haruka is the only one to accept a dare—and she has no problem prank-calling the all-night pharmacy and asking them to look for a prescription under a made-up name that makes Michiru blush. For Usagi's third turn selecting the next player, she picks Michiru.

"Truth or dare?"

Michiru looks around, the tips of her ears burning under the weight of everyone's gaze. She opens her mouth, intending to say, *Truth*.

But then her eyes land on Haruka. Wouldn't it be lame to request another truth when Haruka has already accepted three dares? Does it even matter?

"Dare," she says, resolutely.

Somebody gasps. Usagi blinks as if it never occurred to her that this was even a possibility. "Oh, okay…" Her eyes scan the faces around the circle, eventually landing on Haruka. Then, her face breaks out in a wide grin. "I dare you to kiss Haruka."

This time, multiple people gasp. Even Haruka, normally so bold and unruffled, is shocked. She turns to Michiru, not quite meeting her gaze. Her cheeks are slightly flushed. "A dare's a dare… Ha, ha, unless you don't want to! I totally get it if—"

Michiru kisses her.

It's intended to be a quick peck, barely a kiss at all, but Michiru and Haruka…both just kind of stay there for a long moment, neither wanting to pull away first. Michiru can barely hear the squealing (and one person clapping) over the blood rushing in her ears. When she finally pulls away, she catches Haruka's gaze.

She looks more than a little shocked, but she doesn't seem angry or upset. Michiru clears her throat and ignores the frantic pounding of her heart. "Ami, truth or dare?"

Michiru sags in relief when the attention is finally pulled away from her. She doesn't notice that Haruka has scooted closer until she feels the warm weight of her hand resting over her own.

WHICH 90'S ANIME VILLAIN COULD YOU BEAT IN A FIGHT ?

Ever wondered how you measure up against iconic anime villains? Through this quiz of brain and brawn, let's find out how you handle the heat!

1 How often do you workout?

a. I haven't since I finished school.
b. I like to go when the mood strikes.
c. One or twice a week consistently.
d. I live at the gym.

2 Quick! Using only mental math, what's fifty-two times twenty-one?!

a. I'm not even going to bother trying.
b. I tried and didn't get it right.
c. 1092, but phew did it take me a while to get here.
d. 1092.

3 What is your greatest strength?

a. Creativity
b. Resilience
c. Strength
d. Intelligence

4 You're lost in a jungle and can take only one item from the following list with you. You take a ...

a. Map
b. First-aid kit
c. Pack of matches
d. Knife

5 You find yourself alone in an abandoned house rumored to be haunted. Suddenly, you feel something breathing down your neck. You...

a. Beg for your life. Appeal to the pathos and gather sympathy.
b. Freeze. If you don't make any sudden movements, it'll ignore you.
c. Run. Don't look back at whatever you're leaving in the dust.
d. Start throwing punches— it's you or them and you refuse to make this your final resting place.

6 Instead of bringing a knife to a gun fight you...

a. Don't show up at all.
b. Bring your friends. There's nothing as strong as the power of friendship.
c. Only need your fists.
d. Use whatever you can find in the environment.

7 What is your greatest weakness?

a. Naivety
b. Emotional attachment
c. Physical weakness
d. Recklessness

8 What's your go-to strategy in a fight?

a. Rely on tricks and mental games.
b. Dodge and counterattack when they least expect it
c. Go in with brute force and overwhelm them
d. Use my wits and outsmart my opponent

9 How do you celebrate your victory?

a. Party with your friends. Nothing can keep you from having a good time!
b. Journal your experience to share your story.
c. Relax. Rest and recuperate.
d. Start preparing for your next challenge.

10 With which iconic line do you resonate the most?

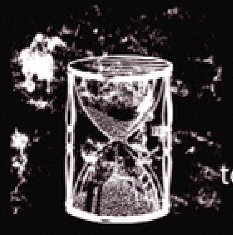
a. "This world is made of love and peace." - Vash The Stampede
b. "I don't want to conquer anything. I just think that the man with the most freedom in this whole ocean is the Pirate King." - Monkey D. Luffy
c. "I never go back on my word. That's my Ninja Way." - Uzumaki Naruto
d. "I do not fear death. I fear only that my rage will fade over time." - Kurapika

Give yourself 1 point for every a, 2 points for every b, 3 points for every c, and 5 points for every d. Now add them up and see which villain you could take on!

10-17 points

SETO KAIBA *Yu-Gi-Oh!*

You may not be the strongest or the brightest around, but you show up when it matters. What you lack in physical strength, you make up with your creativity. With his arrogance and silver spoon, Kaiba leaves himself vulnerable to trap cards. Let him underestimate you as you wait for an opening to play your hand!



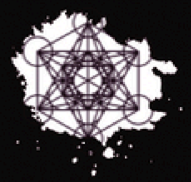
SIR CROCODILE *One Piece*

18-24 points

You're a lover, not a fighter. But to protect yourself and your loved ones you'll put together all the clues to defeat this predator of the sea. Sure, in a battle of physical prowess you might not measure up to this crime boss, but with some help from your allies and a little bit of pressure, you'll find his weakness just in time.

25-31 points

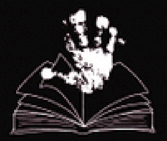
SCAR *Fullmetal Alchemist*



You're no stranger to the battlefield. You've been in scuffles before, but always for good reason. There's something about Scar's grief and thirst for vengeance that you see mirrored in yourself, and that makes him a tough match-up for you.

CHROLLO LUCILFER *Hunter x Hunter*

32-38 points



It's not a battle of brawn that challenges you— it's a battle of brain. Your muscles have brought you this far, but it alone will not be enough to defeat this crime lord. With intellect and a bit of creativity, you'll find a way to trap this spider in his own web.

39-44 points

UCHIHA ITACHI *Naruto*

If it's a battle you want, it's a battle you'll get. There are few stronger and faster than this renowned shinobi, but with your wits and strength, you'll prove a formidable foe. As his darkness surrounds you, there is one question you must ask yourself: do you fight him because of your bravery or your inexperience?

MILLIONS KNIVES *Trigun*

45-50 points

You crave a worthy opponent. Years of training and countless defeated opponents have made you into the champion you are today. Million Knives' thirst for blood doesn't scare you, it excites you. You thrive under situations of high pressure, and none is as high as this battle to the death.

The moonlight is a messenger of love, but what could your dreams be a messenger of? Dreams aren't as straightforward as you might think– something that seems clear can be a symbol of something else. Check some common dream symbols below to find out the secret hidden in your dreams!

A crystal is a symbol of inner power. You're probably stronger than you think!

Water is needed by all humans to live, and is thought of as holy in many cultures. Water can symbolize health or life. Is there a medical issue you've been worrying about?

Fire is a necessary part of life, but it's also dangerous. If you dream of fire, maybe there's something or someone in your life you should be extra careful around– Or maybe it's time to appreciate someone who brings a little spark to your life.

The moon is a symbol of destiny. Time to face the truths you've been avoiding, and find out who you really are!

A rose is a symbol of a love, past or future. Is there someone in your life you want to be closer to? Or could there be a love from your past that you're destined to meet again?

Chains bind, but they also connect, and can be used in decoration or jewelry. They can symbolize a duty you or someone else is bound to; perhaps there's a way to help share the burden together.

A tree in your dream symbolizes strength and stability, perhaps someone you can rely on. Maybe that person needs to rely on you too– It could be time to check in on your most reliable friend!

90's anime BINGO

Mark off classic tropes as you spot them and aim for bingo before the credits roll!

SHOUTED OUT ATTACK NAME	MAIN CHARACTER SITTING BY THE WINDOW	HOT SPRING	THE POWER OF FRIENDSHIP	SAME EYE AND HAIR COLOR
TSUNDERE	LONG INTERNAL MONOLOGUE IN THE MIDDLE OF A FIGHT	HEART EYES OR NOSEBLEED	GLASSES LENS FLARE	A CHARACTER WHO LOVES EATING
LOVE TRIANGLE	MALE GENIUS	FREE SPACE	THE BEACH EPISODE	SPEECH IN THE MIDDLE OF A FIGHT
EMOTIONLESS GIRL	ROOFTOP SCENE	THE AIRHEAD	CHARACTER WITH SHARK TEETH	RANDOM FANSERVICE
NOT A SINGLE PARENT APPEARS THE ENTIRE ANIME	TRAGIC BACKSTORY	BOKE AND TSUKKOMI ROUTINE	AHO GE	RUNNING WITH TOAST IN MOUTH

getting crafty

Alex

DIY Felt Embroidery

pokémon

Whilst you're bingeing pokemon, watching Ash and the gang travelling the Orange Islands, facing Team Rocket at every turn, why don't you keep your hands busy by making this beginner friendly felt embroidery?

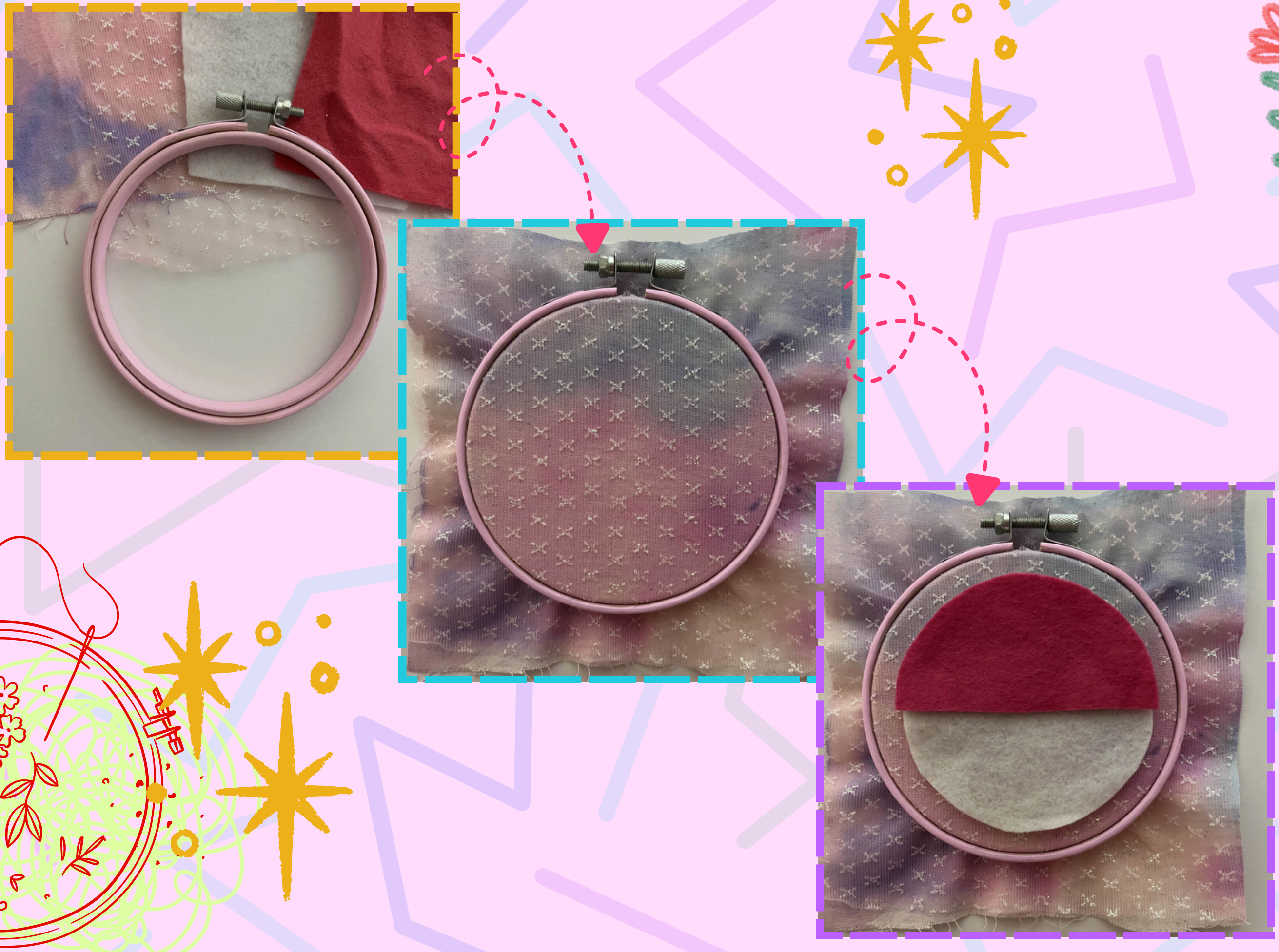
Click Me!

Material & Tools

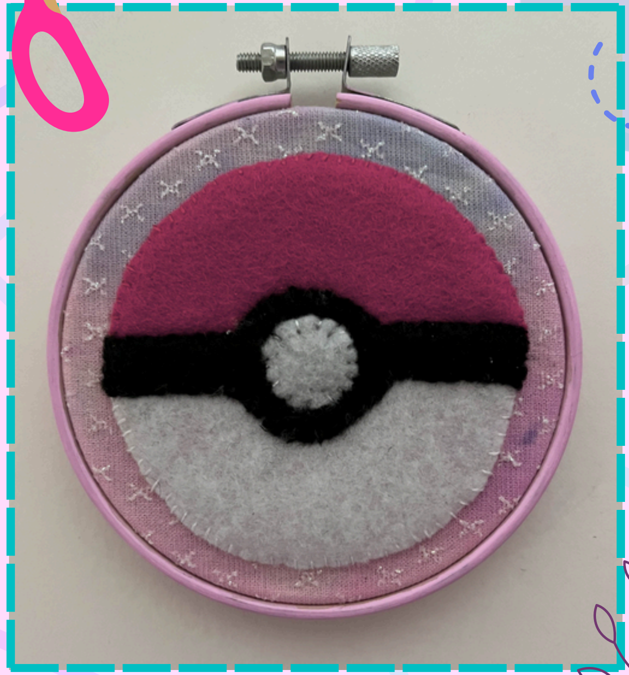
- An embroidery hoop (I used a 4 inch hoop, but you may wish to go bigger or smaller!)
- One sheet of pink, black and white felt
- A lightweight backing fabric
- Pink, white and black thread
- A sewing needle

Optional:

- Acrylic Paint



Gotta Craft Em All!



getting crafty

Ophiuchus

Going Merry Papercraft

one piece

Thank you so much for your interest in this Going Merry papercraft! Here are some tips from the creator to help you get started. If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to artbyophiuchus@gmail.com

Printing Tips:

1) Make sure you set your printer to double sided printing, with no auto centering or rescaling
2) Print one page in black and white first to check how far off the front and back is.
3) If it is significantly off alignment, use a program to nudge the art in the desired direction. PDFCandy and Photoshop are known to work for this, but anything that can edit PDFs will do.
4) If this is too difficult, it is recommended you print out the coloured pdfs on separate papers and simply paste together any double sided colour pieces (e.g.: crows nest) while using the PDF as a folding guide.
5) If all else fails, you can print only the outlines and colour in the rest by hand!

Assembly tips:

1) Make sure you cut along all dark black lines and fold along dotted lines.
2) Scissors work alright for cutting all the pieces but if you have access to an art knife it is faster and easier for small cuts.
3) Creasing your fold in both directions makes assembly much easier.
4) A glue stick would make assembly much neater/cleaner but will be more difficult to use on small areas, whereas glue paste will be much messier (tissues recommended) but makes assembly much easier.
5) It is recommended to start with the larger pieces and work your way down to smaller pieces. The two pages with the ship body should be first, then the two masts, then the rest of the pieces.

Directions

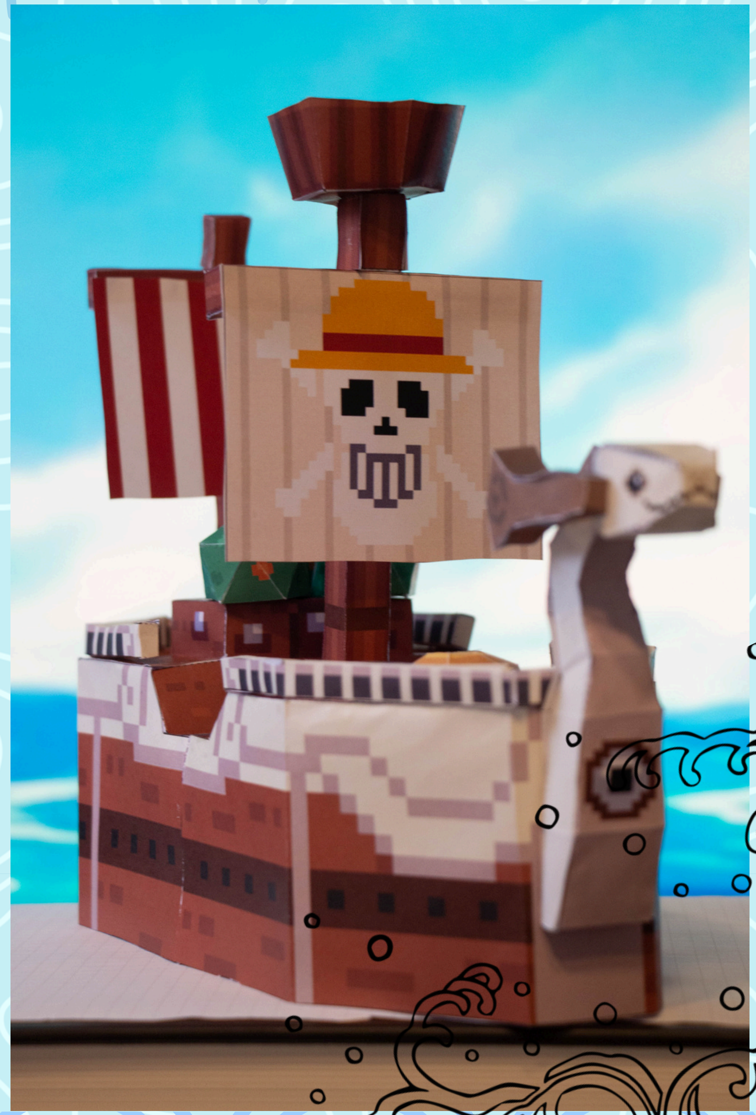
- Cut along solid black lines
- Crease along dashed black lines (in both directions)
- Glue use glue on grey flaps and attach corresponding numbers

Supplies

- Paper
- Glue
- Scissors
- Printer

Click Me!

I hope you enjoy assembling this piece! And if you are working with friends, I hope this is more fun than assembling ikea furniture, at the least.



Alex

DIY SLEEP MASK

pokémon

You might be staying up all night at the sleepover, but who says you don't wanna catch a few *zzz's* when the sun rises?

This DIY sleep mask is both simple to make and super practical! It's also perfect for beginners as it can be hand sewn or machine sewn pretty quickly. There's a world of nerdy fabrics out there just waiting for you to explore, and a *little* craft like this only requires a small amount, so this is a project that won't break the bank!

Want an easy project for you and your friends to work on during late night movies and in-between pillow fights? Then this is the project for you!

Click Me!

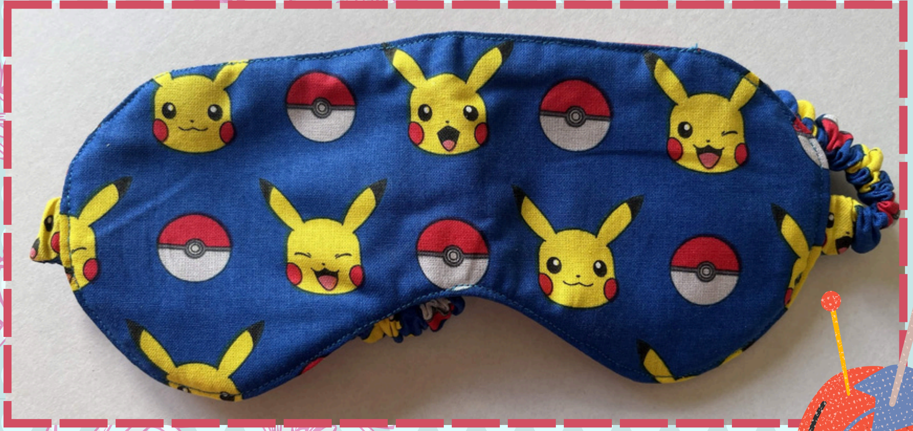
Material

- 2 pieces of 10" x 4" fabric.
  - o These are for the front and back of the eye mask, and can be made from the same or different fabrics. You might like a practical light to medium weight cotton fabric for the front, and a softer satin fabric for the piece that will be against your eyes!

- 1 piece of batting, and/or an old t-shirt.
- 10-15" of ½ inch wide elastic.

If covering the elastic with fabric, you will also need:

- 35"x2" strip of your main fabric.



Tools

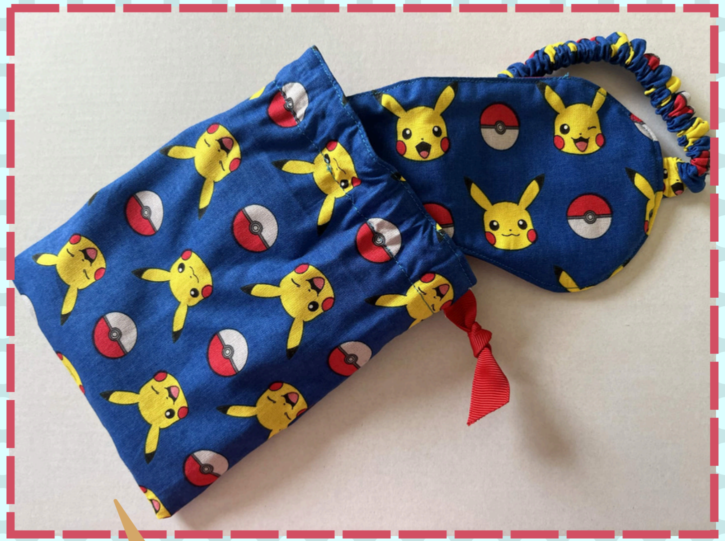
- Scissors
- A needle and thread or a sewing machine.
- A pen/paper to trace the pattern.

- Sewing pins/sewing clips

If covering the elastic with fabric you will also need:

- A safety pin

DIY SLEEP MASK POUCH



Material

- 2 rectangles of 12" x 8" fabric
- 18 inches of ¼ inch ribbon

Tools

- Scissors
- A needle and thread or a sewing machine.
- Sewing pins/sewing clips
- A safety pin
- A pencil or washable marker

Click Me!

You've got your pyjamas, you've got your snacks, you've got your favourite anime on vhs, ready to binge all night long! Don't forget to pack your DIY sleep mask too! Though, if you want to bring it in style, how about making this easy-peasy matching pouch too?

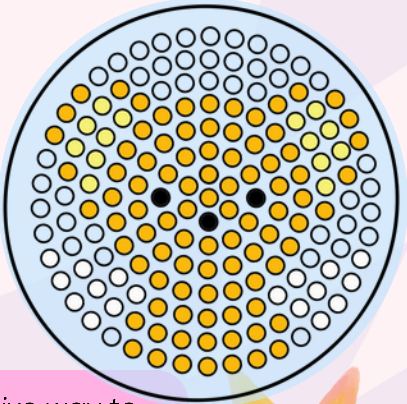
You don't need to have the sewing abilities of Machi Komacine to make this beginner friendly project!

Eialyne

Fuse Beads & Patterns

An activity well known to many growing up in the 90s, fuse beads are a fun and creative way to create objects and patterns from a sequence of strategically placed beads, not dissimilar to pixel art and cross stitch. Provided you have the needed pegboards and bead colors, the possibilities are endless to make creations that are not just artwork, but can be modified to be coasters, magnets, or even jewelry!

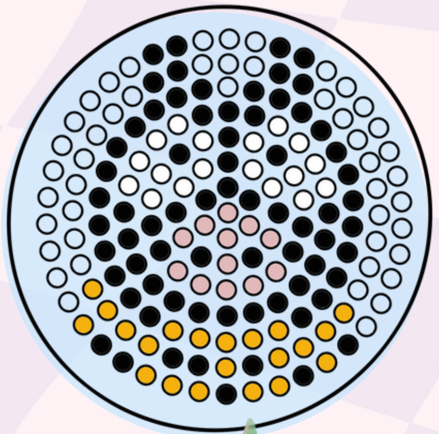
The patterns included in this zine (more can be found in the digital copy!) can all be done on basic 3in circle pegboards, perfect for some quick and easy sleepover fun!



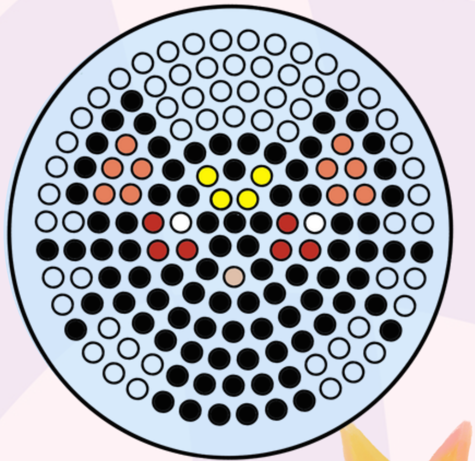
Kero

Instructions:

1. Set iron to either medium heat or the wool/cotton setting (do NOT add water!)
2. Arrange beads on the pegboard of your choosing, either following one of the included patterns, or get creative on your own!
3. Place parchment (NOT wax) paper over your creation, making sure the entire design is covered.
4. Place iron gently on top of the beads and move in slow circles, checking under the paper every 10 seconds or so to ensure the beads are fusing.
5. Once all beads are fused, remove iron and let cool slightly before gently peeling back parchment paper and removing from the pegboard.
    a. Optional: Flip creation over and iron the other side if you like the melted look on both sides.



P-Chan

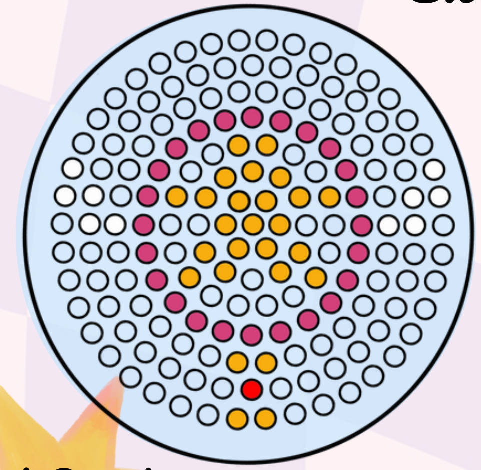


Luna

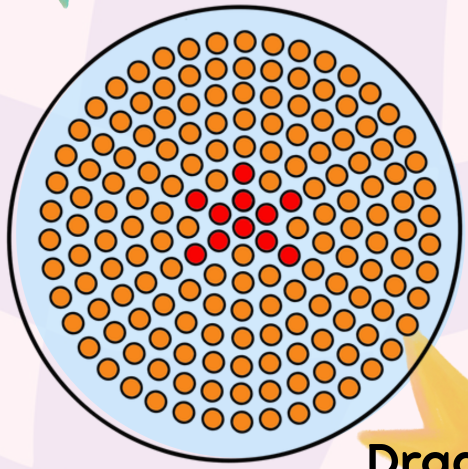
Tips:

1. Tweezers help if you don't have the dexterity to place beads by hand.
2. Parchment paper can be re-used several times, but keep an eye on it to ensure it is not burning or tearing.
3. Keep iron flat and level with the beads so as to avoid melting the pegboard by accident. This will be easier with a full board design.
4. Placing your creation under a flat, heavy object (such as a thick hardback book) after you're done ironing can help avoid curling as the beads cool.
5. If gluing pieces together to make larger designs, or adhering a magnet to the back, E6000 is recommended.

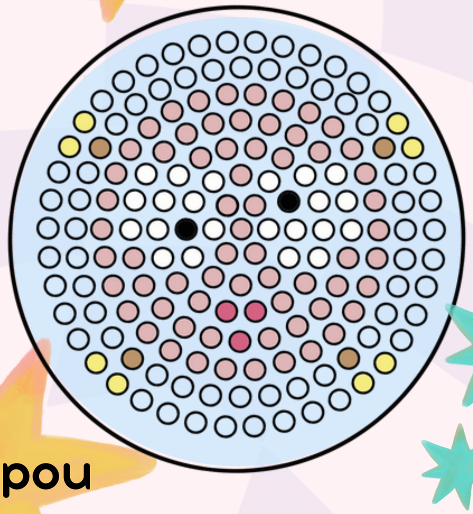
Extras:



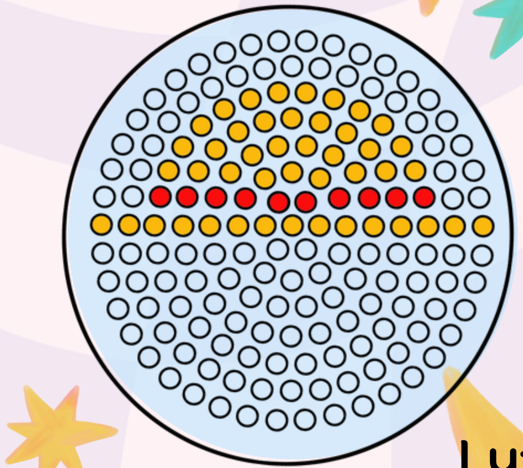
Card Captor Wand



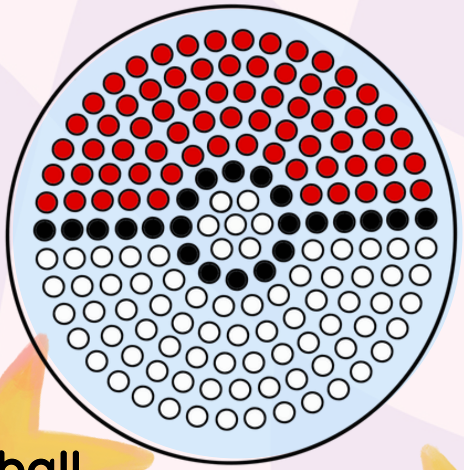
Dragonball



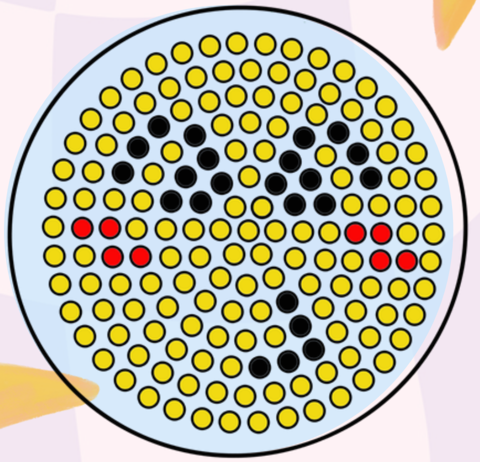
Shippou



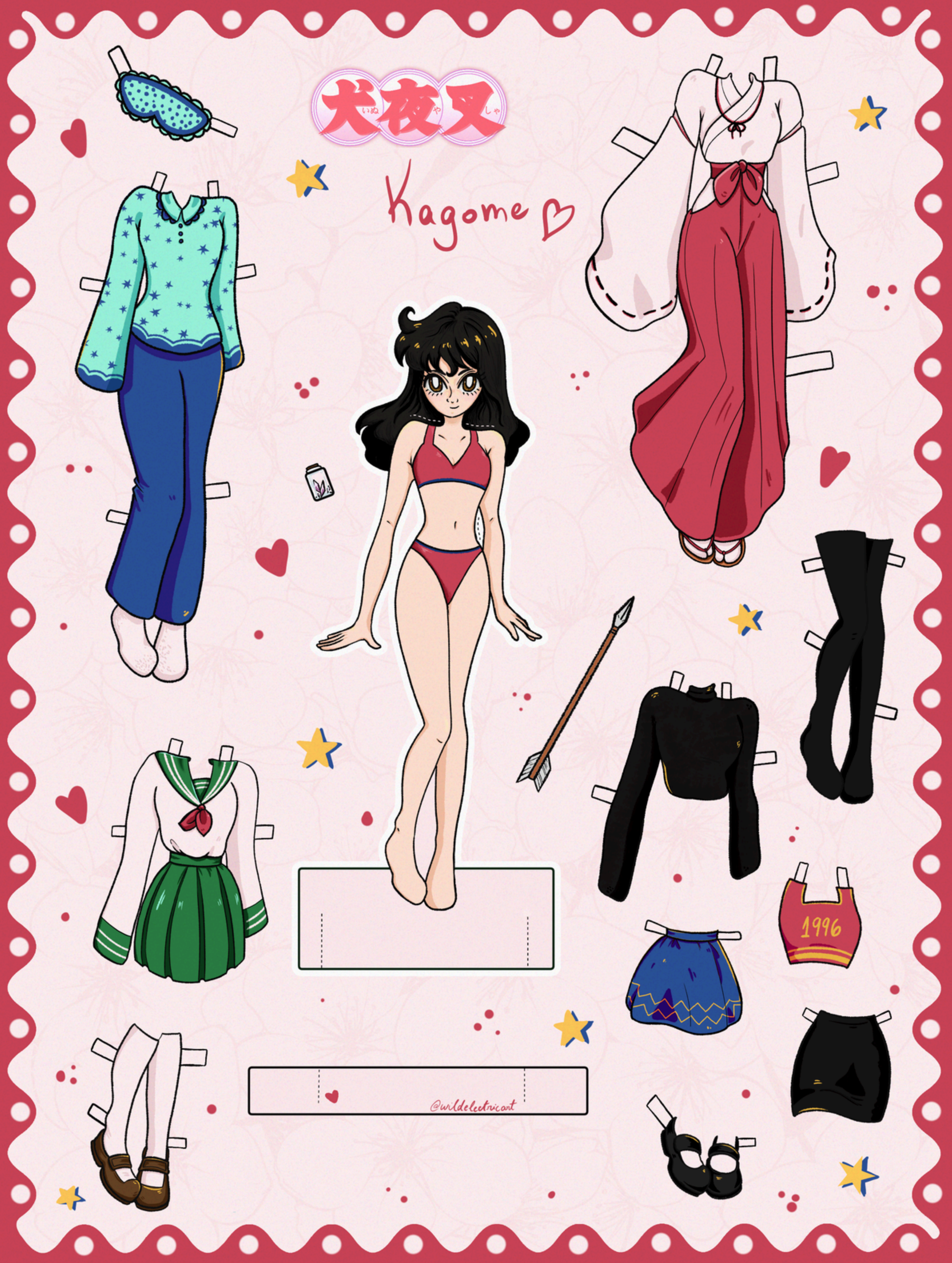
Luffy's Straw Hat



Pokeball



Ed


犬夜叉
Kagome ♡
1996
@wildelectricant

Kaoruhana

A Good King

vision of escaflowne

van/hitomi

Her arrival was both expected and unexpected when it happened. Hitomi knew she would be back to Gaia, that there was always something calling her there. She even knew that sometime would be after she'd finished high school: though even that timeline had been in flux as to *when* that might be. Still, she didn't expect that she'd be taking one last jog around the high school track one morning and see the portal open, showing her the same vision she'd had in her dreams almost every night since coming back to Earth would occur on the very last day of high school: right after graduation.

It was a good thing she had Yukari nearby: her friend running over with a bag that Hitomi had meticulously prepared just in case. Her family might have been aware of her impending departure, especially when she'd gone shopping with Yukari for a new pair of track shorts the weekend before and selected the exact same ones from her vision and she'd come back subdued. Her mother had plied her with her favorite foods, her brother had tried his best to not antagonize her, and her father and grandmother had taken her aside after dinner each day for several long, heart to heart conversations.

There was still so much she wanted to tell the people on Earth, but as she found herself being whisked away to Gaia, she knew that they would understand.

They always had.

So, she returned Yukari's wave and closed her eyes, letting the magic take over and transport her back to Van.

Van was pacing when she arrived, falling in a heap on the floor of his bedroom. He stopped, hands falling to his sword at the bright light that always accompanied her presence and then blushed, turning away quickly and marching over to a nearby wardrobe to yank out a tunic that he threw in her direction.

All things considered, Hitomi did understand his actions though she'd always expected a more welcome arrival to Gaia. Then again, she hadn't expected to fall into Van's bedroom of all places either, clad in her tiny track shorts and a sweaty t-shirt.

She pushed the tunic away for now and dug into the gym bag that she'd brought with her, fishing out a pair of sweatpants to wear over her shorts for the time being. Once dressed a bit more *acceptably* for Gaia's tastes, she cleared her throat.

Perhaps she could try to fix this greeting and welcome.

"Van, you can turn around now." *And greet me* she thought in her head.

He hesitated for a few moments then turned, and took her in, just as she did him. It had been two years after all since they'd seen each other in person. He seemed taller: larger and more in control of himself. But at the same time, though his shoulders were broader, he was more hunched over, a weight settled on those broad shoulders that she hadn't seen before. His eyes were tired, the bags under them visible. The man before her was quite different from the teenager she'd left behind.

It wasn't as though she shouldn't expect it, she knew. After all, she herself had changed from the fifteen year old who had been transported to Gaia in her school uniform. She'd matured and come to know herself, filled out in ways that she hadn't expected. But she was still Hitomi, the girl who loved to race on the track, whose hair was always short, and who had visions of the future.

And she hoped that while he looked different on the outside, the man before her was still *her Van*, the Gaian prince she'd fallen in love with.

Van walked towards her, stopping only a step away. He raised his hand and it hovered in the air, waiting.

It only took a moment for her to make up her mind even while he hesitated, throwing her arms around his body and finally, finally feeling his arms come around her again. It felt right to be there, in his arms, to know that no matter what happened, she'd have him there with her. She felt his lips ghost over her temple as he uttered her name.

"*Hitomi*." He whispered, the words quietly uttered as though he didn't want to break the stillness, afraid that it might break something.

"Van."

He pulled away, hands now mapping her face, and then stopped as footsteps sounded in the corridor outside. Eyes widening, he pulled away and Hitomi made a sound of displeasure just as a guard knocked on the door.

"Lord Van," the man's voice sounded through the door. "Is everything alright?"

Van stepped away from her, turning back to his wardrobe, his shoulders squared. "Yes," he stated, voice taut with authority. It was something she'd never heard before, and Hitomi wondered at this change as she pulled her eyes away from him and took in the room around her. There was a wooden stand on one side holding up a regal cape and some other clothing: it didn't take long for her to realize this would be the robes he wore when he acted as king.

He rolled his shoulders back and walked to the door, opening it and stepping outside into the hallway. Hitomi couldn't see the knight, but she heard the conversation Van was having with him.

"Please leave me tonight, Cyrdric. I need some time alone after the Coronation today. The lady Meryl can see to the festivities."

"But My Lord!"

"Please tell the Lady Meryl she can come speak to me if there is anything of utmost importance. She knows I would only avoid the festivities for very important reasons."

The knight mumbled something that she didn't catch and then the door shut. It gave her time to look around the room again.

She'd fallen near the windows of the room, near the bed which was a beautiful four poster with intricate mahogany detailing and carvings on the posts. There was a smaller antechamber connected through which she could see the door to the corridor.

She'd never been in Van's bedroom before, and she took it in: the warm walls, the fading sunset rays. There was a scabbard laying on a table and on a desk some paper and a letter. Curious, she made her way over and looked at it, shocked to see the letter addressed to her.

It was different to see this side of him: to see Van in a place that was his sanctuary. She felt humbled that he didn't think to have her leave the room and instead let her stay without immediately calling for Meryl.

"Did you know?"

Startled, Hitomi jumped, her hand movements causing the letter to flutter to the floor. Van walked over to pick it up. As he read it, Hitomi saw him furrow his brows and straighten.

"I guess me calling for you does work."

"What?" Hitomi asked, shocked and confused. She didn't know what she expected when she arrived in Gaia, but at the same time, she hadn't expected to be caught unawares like this, to have herself be in a position where she didn't understand again. It was... unnerving.

And she didn't know if she was only called for a brief purpose again.

She had prepared to stay with Van. Not leave him behind once more.

"Today's my coronation." Van started turning, his eyes showing how nervous he was. "I don't..." he ran a hand in the air, indicating the room, the space, everything. "I don't know what I am doing. Didn't either when they crowned me earlier." His hands crumpled the letter. "I begged for you to be here so I could get some guidance. It worked for once."

"Coronation?"

At some point, Hitomi knew Van had a kingdom, a place to rule. But, she forgot sometimes. Because to her Van was still the boy she'd met in the Escaflowne, the one who fought in the suit and protected the people of Gaia. But, he was much more than that, wasn't he?

And he wanted her guidance?

She didn't know what to say or how to console him. But she knew this: Van needed her support. And as an 18 year old who had some knowledge and experience she might not be the best candidate to offer that support but she would do what she could to help.

Hitomi stepped close to him again. She didn't understand what it meant to run a kingdom, to be accountable for so many people, at least not like Van. Her vision of the future meant that she was constantly seeing people's lives play out before her, but she wasn't the ultimate authority or figure whose actions controlled someone's life. She couldn't imagine having such a burden, especially at her age.

But Van, Van could. Van was more than what he thought he was. He was strong, a true leader. He went out into the villages and town and saw firsthand what his people needed. He stood for them when Zaibach tried to ruin Gaia. He was fair to his people, just and kind.

How could he not see all of that?

Reaching out, Hitomi laid a hand on his shoulder, raising herself on her toes just enough to lay a chaste kiss on his cheek.

"I have faith in you," she told him, stepping back down, hand still resting on his shoulder. "I hope you do too."

Van held her other hand, squeezing it softly between his. "Do you really think so?" He met her gaze as he spoke, seeking validation. "I barely know the people as a ruler."

"But you know them, don't you see?" Hitomi smiled softly, remembering the times he went around Gaia, especially the town and villages Van knew. "Your people love you, Van. They love the man who led their country to safety, their world to safety. They admire you and the way you are willing to sacrifice everything, and anything for your country." She let go of his shoulder and pushed some of his bangs away from his face, hand lingering in his hair.

"I admire you because it takes a lot for a man to stand up to Zaibach, when he's only just barely finished growing up. And your people know you, *the true you*."

Van frowned and then pulled her with his hand, pulling her towards the bed. He sat on it, then tugged her closer until they both sat next to each other.

"Do you really think I'll be a good King?"

"Yes, I think you will." She laid her head on his shoulder. "Why don't you tell me what happened leading up to this? I'd like to learn more of how you got here."

A few hours later, after they shared stories of their time spent apart, Hitomi looked up when the door opened. A familiar face showed up moments later, her pink hair still vibrant and her tail swishing in a familiar pattern. Hitomi held up a finger to her lips and pointed to the man who was sleeping on her lap. He looked peaceful, nowhere as stressed and anxious as he did a few hours earlier.

Meryl sighed and turned around, but not before shooting a quip back at her.

"You know, I should have known it'd be you." She glanced over her shoulder as she walked towards the bedroom door. "Take good care of him Hitomi. I'll leave him to you."

WOOF
HUNTER×HUNTER

ラーメン 楽
ICHIRAKU INSTANT RAMEN
IRUKA SENSEI RECOMMENDS!!!
THE SAME TASTE FOR THE NINJA IN A RUSH! READY IN JUST 3 MINUTES!!!
NOW ALSO IN HOKAGE'S FAVOURITE FLAVOUR!
ラーメン楽
ICHIRAKU RAMEN
INS
IT'S SO GOOD, I EAT IT EVERYDAY!
- UZUMAKI N.

nym

Only Once in a Blue Moon

hunter x hunter **zoldyck siblings**

It seems that all the stars have aligned this weekend for the Zoldyck household to result in a phenomenon that hasn't occurred since the last blue moon: all the Zoldyck siblings are home on the same night.

By some strange coincidence, Illumi and Milluki both chose to visit home this weekend (Illumi claims that Killua was due for a check-in from his favorite older brother; Milluki says he was tired of having to do his own laundry in the college dorms). Alluka and Kalluto, both of whom spend most of their time being hurried from tutor to tutor, are both free this evening, and Killua has decided to skip his extracurriculars for today.

Regardless of the reason, all five of them will be sleeping under the same roof for the first time in many years. For the younger ones, they might not even remember the last time this happened. However, with how expansive the Zoldyck mansion is, it's unlikely that they'll run into one another in the middle of the night, and they'll all set off on their separate ways come early morning.

"Onii-chan, isn't it so exciting that everyone is home? Alluka hates sleeping alone, but Mama and Papa say I'm too old to sleep in their bed anymore."

"You can always come hang out with me if you get lonely, so don't be sad, okay?"

Alluka's face breaks out into an easy grin, and she throws her arms around her older brother. "Thank you, onii-chan!"

Killua ruffles her hair, careful not to mess up her hairstyle. He doesn't care much for talking with his older brothers, but he's glad that Alluka is happy. "Should we start getting ready for bed now?"

"Actually, Alluka wants to do something special with everyone! Let's all have a sleepover in the same room tonight! We can sleep on one big futon and share a blanket and tell stories and—"

"Hold on, a group sleepover? With Illu-nii and Millu-nii, and even Kalluto? Wouldn't you rather just sleep over in onii-chan's room?" It's no secret that their older brothers aren't nearly as patient with Alluka as Killua is, despite their age difference. Even Kalluto does his best to steer clear most of the time. Forcing them all to spend that much time together in such close quarters might result in disaster, and the last thing Killua wants is for Alluka to be needlessly hurt.

"Don't be sad, onii-chan," Alluka says, mirroring Killua's earlier words. She motions for him to lean his head down toward her, and then she pats his head. It seems that she's been watching him even more closely than he originally thought. "Alluka will be okay. Who knows when everybody will be able to get together like this again? Gotou said we can use the big bedroom in the east wing."

"Alright," he concedes, albeit reluctantly. Maybe his little sister has grown more than he realized. After all, Alluka has somehow managed to convince their surly head butler to let her use their biggest guest room before she even got Killua's permission. She's right on track to becoming a full-fledged Zoldyck.

"Oh, and can't we invite Nanika to play with us, too?"

It's always hard for Killua to resist any type of request that his only younger sister makes of him, but especially so when it relates to Nanika, her imaginary friend. He knows that he has always been Alluka's favorite brother which is why he harbors guilt for not having been around the house the last couple of years. Killua doesn't regret traveling for boarding school given all the new experiences he's had and friends he's made, but his one and only regret would be leaving Alluka all alone in the big Zoldyck house with only Nanika for company.

"...Okay," he relents, finally. "Nanika can come, but only if she promises to be good, okay?"

"Nanika says she'll be on her best behavior!" Alluka exclaims, nodding excitedly, the pink beads in her hair clacking together with the force. "Thank you, onii-chan! Alluka will go ask Kalluto to come!"

As Alluka runs off to her room, Killua breathes out a sigh of equal parts relief and worry. Their brothers haven't always reacted well to the idea of Alluka having an "imaginary friend", so he's already starting to think of how to broach this subject. Milluki and Kalluto have no sense of tact whatsoever, and Illumi would make fun of her just for the sake of it.

"Well, well. I see that Alluka hasn't lost any of her affection for you since we last met up, Killu."

"Come on, aniki. If you want her to call you *onii-chan* as well, then all you have to do is ask."

Illumi blanches, his delicate features twisted up in a put-upon expression of disgust. "Now when did I ever say anything about that? If you want to play the part of lovey-dovey siblings, then you should feel free to. Don't involve me in such trivialities."

Unbothered by Illumi's harsh tone, Killua just smirks, shoving his hands into his pockets as he walks off. Dealing with his oldest brother is an art form akin to a balancing act, and sometimes the best response is just to leave before the conversation gets any more heated than it already is.

"Tell Millu-nii to be in the Hyacinth Room in an hour," he calls without looking back or waiting for a response. Killua trusts that Illumi had been intently listening in on his conversation with Alluka, so he doesn't feel the need to explain any further.

With all the invitations taken care of, there's only one thing left to do before the sleepover starts: deciding what pajamas to wear.

* * * * *

"No matter how many times I see it, I still am at an utter loss at how you allow yourself to sleep like that." Illumi's tone is as snide as it's ever been when he eyes Milluki's pajamas—if they can even be called that.

Milluki is wearing an old graphic t-shirt so thin and worn that it's starting to fray around the hem, a small hole visible near the collar. His pants can probably be generously described as what used to be track pants, although their color has all but faded after so many washes.

"That's rude, Illu-nii," Killua snickers, Alluka nodding fervently in agreement. "I'm sure Millu-nii doesn't understand how you can sleep like that either."

Like *that* meaning the matching pajama set Illumi is wearing, made of luxurious, expensive green silk. As if that didn't already make him look incredibly out of place among the rest of them, his pin-straight hair has been carefully brushed out and left to flow behind him dramatically. Illumi holds a color-coordinated silk cap and pillowcase in his hands as well.

"It doesn't surprise me at all that Millu doesn't take any protective measures for his hair and skin," Illumi sniffs, narrowing his eyes at his brothers. "Everyone knows that silk is the best type of material to sleep in. How else do you think I achieve this kind of look?"

"Illumi, Milluki, don't fight anymore! Let's play a game instead!" Alluka appears between the two, one of their hands clutched in each of hers as she drags them both to the center of the guest room. Alluka's matching pink pajamas have the same pattern as her everyday hair accessories, and a loose pink and yellow headband rests on top of her hair. Caught off guard, Illumi and Milluki allow themselves to be pulled to the area where Alluka has laid out various board games, stuffed animals, and pillows.

"Games?" A quiet voice interrupts the din, Kalluto emerging from one of the darker corners of the room. "Don't you think that's rather childish for our elder brothers, Alluka-onee-sama?"

"What do you mean, Kalluto?"

Rather than his usual elaborate furisode, Kalluto is dressed in a simpler yukata made of a deep-colored cotton blend that brings out his striking reddish-purple eyes. "I know you're still a child, but as a member of the Zoldyck family, you shouldn't force your own whims on others. Something as menial as games is beneath us. Don't you think so, Killua-onii-sama?"

"Really? Onii-chan, is Alluka being too childish right now?"

Both Alluka and Kalluto turn their best pleading gazes on Killua, who is effectively trapped. Each of his younger siblings takes hold of one of the tight sleeves of his long-sleeved shirt.

Killua is also wearing a baggier short-sleeved shirt on top of that with a soft pair of sweatpants—all in all just a more casual version of his everyday clothes. Only tonight, Alluka has clipped two of her favorite clips to Killua's hair as well.

Killua does his best not to explicitly take sides between his siblings most of the time, but... "I wouldn't mind playing games with everyone. That's what we're here for, isn't it?"

Kalluto's expression darkens for a moment before he manages to school it back into one of poised indifference. "If you insist, onii-sama, then I shall join in as well." Once Killua turns away, breathing out a sigh of relief, Kalluto fixes Alluka with a glare. *This isn't over*, he mouths. Alluka only cocks her head in confusion.

"Illu-nii, Millu-nii, get over here."

"Why, I just can't wait," Illumi drawls, although he does obediently sit cross-legged on the floor near the rest of them.

"How about shiritori?" Alluka offers, clapping her hands together. "Alluka is great at word games because Nanika always helps!"

Milluki slaps a hand over his mouth to stifle a laugh after Killua punches him roughly in the shoulder. From the look on his face, Kalluto is torn between calling Alluka out for cheating from getting extra help and scolding her for believing in an imaginary friend in the first place.

"Shiritori sounds like a great idea. Kalluto, why don't you go first?"

"Me?" Kalluto's face changes instantly, elated that Killua would choose him of all people to have the honor of starting off the game. "Then, I will start with *K* from *Kalluto*."

"Oh! Oh! Alluka wants to go next!"

"Ehh? But Illumi wanted to go next," Illumi cuts in, mimicking Alluka's tone of voice and manner of speech. He draws his knees up to his chest, contorting his body into a position that seems unnatural for how long and thin his limbs are.

Alluka looks almost distraught, like she hadn't considered someone else taking the next turn—she's only ever played games by herself with Killua, after all, and Killua can't help but indulge her every whim.

After a few moments of red-faced deliberation, she concedes with a pout. "Okay, Illumi can go now."

"Was that really necessary?" Killua frowns, hands on his hips.

"Why, whatever do you mean, Killu? Anyway, Illumi will be taking his turn now. Hmm, I'll use the *O* from *Kalluto* and go with *onii-chan*."

Milluki can't help but burst out with a laugh after that, although he does his best to cover it up with a belated coughing fit after Killua glares at him. "Nice one, Illu-nii. Let's go in age order, so I'll be next. I'm going with *N* for *nanika* ('something')."

Seriously?, Killua mouths. Alluka and Kalluto, for their part, seem largely unaware of what has their two oldest brothers in a near-laughing fit. The game proceeds more regularly after Killua's turn, although Illumi taps out after only a few rounds, likely having gotten bored already.

In the end, only Alluka and Kalluto are left, shooting increasingly long words rapid-fire at one another.

"Materialization!"

"Nonessential!"

"Lithosphere!"

"Encyclopedia!"

"Antidisestablishmentarianism!"

"Where do they even come up with these things? And how do they know which words not to repeat?" Milluki muses, also having dropped out (he claims it was also because he was bored, but he was out of words to use). "Hey, you guys! What if both of you have lost already because you used a word again?"

Two pairs of offended eyes immediately turn to glower at him.

"A member of the Zoldyck family would never lose for such a foolish reason!"

"Nanika helps Alluka keep track of all the words so far!"

"I—I see." Unprepared for two such genuine answers but outlandish, Milluki is effectively stunned speechless.

"Alluka, Kalluto, why don't we call it a tie? You've both done great so far, but I think it's time to move on to something else."

"Very well, onii-sama."

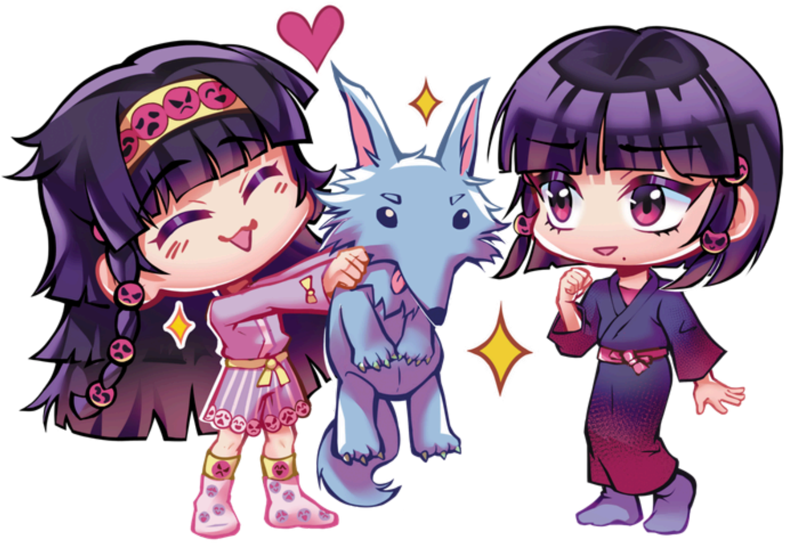
"If onii-chan says so..."

From where he's been lounging on one of the futons, Illumi chimes in. "Don't people usually have pillow fights at sleepovers? That sounds much more fun to me."

"Alluka brought lots of stuffies to play with, so we can use those!" Alluka has indeed amassed an impressive number of stuffed animals of all kinds over the years, and they sit in a tall pile to the side of the blankets.

"You still sleep with those things?" Kalluto scoffs, crossing his arms. He seems extra cross that he was unable to win decisively at shiritori. "Alluka-onee-sama may be older than me, but it seems that she's much more childish than me. Don't you think that it's time to grow up a bit, dear sister?"

Her bottom lip trembling, Alluka's eyes immediately start to water. She runs over to bury her face in Killua's shoulder.



"Don't cry, Alluka. Onii-chan thinks it's fine to play with whatever you want to play with. Besides, oyaji bought those for you, so that means he thinks it's okay for you to have them, right? Kalluto, that was pretty harsh of you to say."

"I'm sorry," Kalluto sighs, bowing his head.

"Why would you say something like that, Kallu? That was pretty unlike you."

"Okaa-sama and otou-sama have never bought anything like that for me," Kalluto confesses quietly, eyes averted. "Everyone thinks that okaa-sama loves me most, but onee-sama is the one who always gets special treatment. It's not fair."

That's news to Killua. It's true that Alluka gets treated differently from the rest of them, but he had always thought that their parents' affection for Kalluto was plain to see. Maybe Alluka wasn't the only one who was heavily affected by his absence from home for the last couple of years.

"Kalluto can play with Alluka's stuffies, too!"

"Onee-sama?"

Wiping the last few tears from her eyes, Alluka jumps up, determined. She takes Kalluto's hand from inside the sleeve of his yukata. "Come pick one! It'll be a present from Alluka."

"But I'm much too mature for this kind of—" Kalluto stumbles right into the pile of stuffed animals, landing on a large cat-shaped pillow. "So soft..."

"Isn't it? Isn't it?"

"Those two are getting along better than I would've thought," Illumi muses, watching his two youngest siblings chatter on, Kalluto clutching the toy that Alluka has chosen for him—a fluffy gray fox—with wide-eyed wonder. "But it's getting rather late. Should we start getting ready to sleep?"

"Let's have a contest," Milluki suggests. "To see who can stay awake the longest."

"What should the prize be, Milluki-onii-sama?"

"How about whoever wins gets to choose what we have for breakfast tomorrow?"

"As usual, the only thing on Millu's mind is food."

"Hey!"

That sounds like fun! Alluka wants to play!"

“Kalluto raises his hand hesitantly. "I'll participate as well. This will be an easy win for me."

"No, Alluka is going to win!"

"Killua-onii-sama, you'll praise me if I win, right?"

"There's no way I'm losing to a couple of tweens," Milluki leers, sticking his tongue out. "Don't underestimate the power of a college student, everyone! I've pulled more all-nighters than I can even count over the years."

"All right everyone, are we all ready to start?"

"Yes!"

* * * * *

Milluki, despite all his blustering, is the first one to lose.

"Should we move Milluki-onii-sama to a more comfortable spot?" Kalluto asks, ducking his head as soon as he speaks. Milluki has fallen asleep sitting up, his head drooping to the side. It seems he was up too late last night clearing the final level of a video game.

"Leave him be," Illumi hums. "He's plenty old enough to learn from the consequences of his own actions. Besides, it would only serve him right for being the first one to fall asleep. Honestly, an older brother should be better than that."

"That's right," Alluka chimes in, but she's starting to slur her words just slightly, her voice tinged with sleepiness. "Milluki should wake up, and, and play with everyone some more."

"Alluka-onee-sama is almost about to lose, too." Kalluto's words are offset by the loud yawn that accompanies them. The two youngest Zoldyck siblings are sitting shoulder-to-shoulder amidst a massive pile of Alluka's stuffed animals, each of them clutching a plushie in their arms.

"I'm not! Alluka is... Alluka is still—"

"There's no need to push yourself, Alluka. We'll all still be here tomorrow morning. Don't worry." Cupping the back of her head, Killua gently lays Alluka down on her side, smoothing out her hair where it's spread out on her pillow. He does the same for Kalluto, arranging them on side-by-side futons. "You won't have to wake up alone in the morning, so sleep well tonight."

Finally, he pulls the largest blanket from the pile and spreads it over the two of them. Alluka had once mentioned that one of her wishes was to experience sharing a blanket. They all have their own rooms and beds in the manner, but as the only girl, Alluka is separated from her brothers even on the off chance that they travel together. With her mother and father in a different room, Alluka has always been made to sleep alone. With the way that she and Kalluto are cuddled up together now, she looks perfectly content.

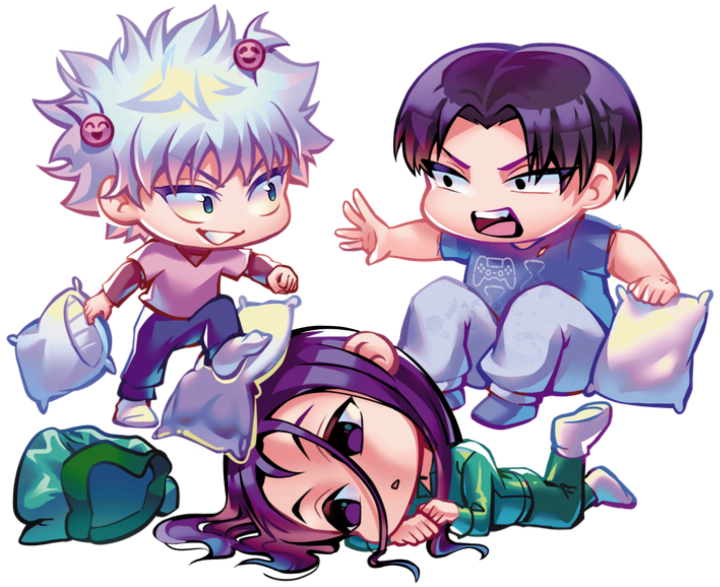
"I guess it's just the two of us now, Killu. As expected, of course," Illumi smirks, smug. "Shall we have a bet on which of us can last until dawn?"

"Nah. I'm going to bed now."

"...Hah?!"

You can have the win, aniki. No point in pulling an all-nighter for no reason." Picking up one of the thinner blankets, Killua settles on his side on the remaining futon. From the start, he was only planning on staying up long enough to tuck in his younger brother and sister. Besides, he wants to wake up bright and early to play with them tomorrow morning, so he'll need all the sleep he can get. "Night, aniki."

"Honestly, these guys are just too much." With a sigh, Illumi looks over his four younger siblings one last time, all sprawled out in various positions. "I guess I might as well turn in for the night as well." Fluffing out his pillow, he lies down as well. The last thing Illumi thinks before he closes his eyes is, *I should come home more often.* Maybe the next blue moon will come soon after all.



Mary Weather

Drink the Stars

yu yu hakusho **yusuke/koenma**

When Yusuke arrived at the palace, he noticed the glimmering sparkles falling all around him like little dancing fairies. Lovely as they were, he walked on, not paying them much mind. He'd seen enough in his time as a Spirit Detective—now *retired* Spirit Detective—to not be impressed by such things. Besides, Koenma and Botan didn't drag him out of retirement for nothing. An important mission waited for him within the deep halls of the palace and he intended to see it through.

With razor sharp focus, Yusuke dashed through the familiar corridors towards Koenma's office. In his peripheral, the glint of the shining stars sticking to the windows tried to steal his attention. Resisting their lure proved difficult, but he had no time to play around with sparkles and glitter like some arts and crafts project. Not when Spirit World needed him again.

A wave of nostalgia hit him as he burst into Koenma's office, nearly knocking the door off its hinges. He couldn't wait to be briefed, to once again act as the world's sword and shield, to finally have a chance to fight again.

"Hey–uh? Koenma? Botan?"

The two didn't so much as flinch at Yusuke's explosive entrance, nor did they look ready to tell him about some world ending disaster. Instead, they stared out the window, arms linked together, occasionally touching the glass with their free hands.

A giggle left Botan as she pressed her finger to one of the stars that stuck to the window, and Koenma mimicked that laugh. A gentle energy crackled between the two of them. Something exciting, yet revered, as if they were entranced by a holy miracle.

"Guys?" he called again, aggravation coloring his tone.

No answer.

The stars mesmerized them, holding tight to the duo with its enchantment.

"Hey!" Yusuke barked at them. "You guys called *me* here, remember? I'll leave if you don't need anything! Next time, pay for my cab fare to Spirit World if you're just gonna ignore me the whole time I'm here."

"Oh, don't be so grumpy!" Botan finally faced him, though Koenma stayed right where he was, his body pancaked against the window.

"Don't be grumpy? I get here and there's weird sparkles falling from the sky and you two ignore me and—"

"Come look!" Botan interrupted Yusuke's tirade by motioning for him to join her and Koenma. "You'll enjoy this, Yusuke, I'm sure! It's beautiful."

He meandered over, hands in his pocket, glee filling him at Botan's annoyed expression. But when he got to the window and looked outside, finally seeing the stars instead of just glazing by it, he found himself struck with wonder.

Beautiful was an understatement.

Yusuke peered through the glass, his eyes following the little sparkles that trickled from the ominous sky. Pastel pinks, purples and blues shimmered against the horizon, beckoning Yusuke to run outside and catch them. They winked at him, their siren song pulling him into their warm embrace. He found it hard to turn away. Now that his attention was wholly on this whimsical phenomenon, he realized he didn't want to turn away. They were ethereal, elegant, dainty, like tiny little celestial angels in all different colors coming to greet him.

Indescribable.

That was it. Yusuke couldn't find the words to describe what he was seeing. His feeble mind couldn't wrap around the magnificence of this wonder, this incredible sight that leisurely danced over Spirit World.

Still, he attempted to rationalize it in the only way he knew how.

"Is this... Rain?"

"It's rain," Koenma confirmed, his words wrapped in awe as he gently tapped the glass, pretending to touch a little blue star that flickered into nothing. "Can you believe it? We don't get rain here, Yusuke."

"And when we do," Botan said. "We can expect to not see it again for at least one thousand years. Maybe even two!"

"This is... Spirit World rain?" Yusuke pressed a hand to the window as if he could touch one of the sweet stars. Rather than drizzle down the glass like normal rain, they clung to the surface, winking and teasing the group, before fading away with a small twinkle of pastel light.

"Yes," Koenma answered, his voice still filled with wonder. "It's like little jewels, isn't it?"

Yusuke never heard Koenma so awestruck, as if he were witnessing the most profound event in history. Hell, maybe it was exactly that and Yusuke was too dumb to realize how much he should appreciate this.

"Yeah. It's cute."

"It's more than cute!" Botan pressed herself between the men, linking her arm with Koenma's as a mischievous glint shined in her eye. "It's amazing! It's stunning! And it means Spirit World shuts down so we can have a..."

"Rain viewing party!!"

Koenma and Botan's laughter was filled with such joy that Yusuke almost forgot the reason he was here.

Almost.

"Hey!" He somehow managed to yank himself away from the window to face the duo, but his heart felt a bit colder without the comfort of the rain. "What about the mission?"

The two halted their delight and stared at Yusuke, their wide eyes blinking as if he'd spoken insanity.

"The mission?" he repeated slowly. "The reason you asked me to come here? The reason you brought me out of retirement? The mission that you told me was so dangerous that I needed to come to Spirit World right away? That mission?"

Yusuke didn't miss the flash of guilt that crossed the duo's faces. Whatever their game was, he wasn't amused.

"You two better start explaining yourselves or–"

"Wait, Yusuke!" Koenma cried.

"Or I'm gonna leave!"

"Wait!"

The two dashed to Yusuke, and like a coordinated attack, they nearly pounced on him, both of their faces shoved into his.

"Please don't leave!" Koenma whined.

"Oh please stay! You must!" Botan begged.

"This only happens every few thousand years! We were hoping you'd stay the night!" Koenma cried.

"We have hot chocolate!" Desperation crept through Botan's voice.

"I demand you stay!" Koenma put on his big man voice as he laid down his command.

"I have snacks, too!" Botan offered.

"You will not leave!" Koenma's shaky voice suddenly didn't sound so big now.

"Yusuke, please!" they begged.

"Okay, okay!" Yusuke relented. "Get your breath out of my face and I'll stay!"

"Rain viewing party!!" the two dorks celebrated in unison. Now that they were appeased, Yusuke wasn't sure what to think. What was their game? Their angle? Koenma was an expert at keeping his secrets and, by extension, Botan played right along with him.

Yet, as he glanced out the window at the falling stars, he wondered if he should just let it go. Maybe he should trust them rather than pull away. He *did* trust Koenma and Botan. He trusted that they adored him as much as he adored them. And he had to admit, seeing the wonder in Koenma and Botan's expressions as they watched the rain made him reconsider his jaded mindset. After all, if the literal God of Death and Grim Reaper could marvel at cute, colorful sparkles, then Yusuke could put aside his attitude and trust that everything would be fine.

"We haven't had one of those in so long!" Koenma whined.

"Okay, I need to get some hot chocolate made!" Botan already had a list in her head of everything they'd need to celebrate this enchanting event.

"Yes!" Koenma agreed. "Get Yusuke one of the good cups!"

"And what about the mission? The whole reason you called me here? Even though I'm retired?" Yusuke tried to remind them about his purpose for being here, but both of them dismissed him with a wave of their hands in perfect unison.

"Just… Soon, Yusuke. I'll tell you soon." Koenma promised to reveal the truth and Yusuke pressed down the urge to demand that he speak now. "What's important now is—"

"Hot chocolate!"

Botan finished Koenma's sentence, then dashed away—a grim reaper on a mission.

"Come on! Come with me!" Without waiting for a response, Koenma grabbed Yusuke's wrist and pulled him down the corridors. For all his time as a spirit detective, Yusuke never wandered the halls of the palace. As he navigated them now, he took in the plain green walls, the basic floor tiles, the red columns. It was a dull looking place considering the grandeur of its master.

Eventually, they wound up at a wooden door, its appearance stark against the pale green walls. Yusuke didn't know what he expected when Koenma opened it, but he couldn't help the low whistle that escaped him.

Rows of books lined the walls, which were a soft brown color rather than the ugly green from the corridors. Shelves of books rose to the ceiling, many of them in languages Yusuke didn't recognize. As he walked deeper inside, he took note of the cozy stone fireplace that was already burning, plus the couch and loveseat gathered around it. Beside the couch was a large window that showcased the brilliant stars and glitter outside. Many of the stars stuck to the window, twinkling at Yusuke as he stared at them. It was like he walked into a secret space that was all his own, somewhere hidden away from the world, from his troubles, from all of the anxieties that chased him every day. A cozy tingle coursed over his body as he plopped down on one of the couches, still looking around with the same awe he gave to the colorful stars.

"Who knew a place like this existed here?" He whispered, taking it all in.

"I'm so happy you're here, Yusuke!" Koenma grinned, grabbing fluffy blankets from a small cupboard and piling one after another on Yusuke, burying him in a mound of comfort. He ignored the sputters from the former detective as he attempted to come up for air.

"You're so lucky to see this, you know." His voice held all the veneration from before as he admired the phenomena through the glass. "It's so rare. I was barely an adult when this last happened." Koenma slid onto the couch beside Yusuke as if he were made of water, slipping off his shoes and curling his legs under him as he freed himself of his suffocating scarf.

"You're hardly an adult now."

A smack on his leg was the reward for his comment.

"What would you know about being an adult?"

"More than you."

"Doubtful," Koenma mocked.

"And what's adult about getting all excited about starry rain?"

Koenma rolled his eyes, then dismissed anything else Yusuke wanted to say with a wave of his hand.

"Hey now! This is a phenomenon! A beautiful rainfall that only happens every few thousand years! Just… Well, just look!" A serene smile crossed his lips as he motioned outside. He curled deeper into himself, resting his head on the back of the couch as he watched the rainfall. "I remember when I was young, I used to run around outside trying to catch the stars. The tingle, you know?"

"Oh?" Yusuke curled up as well, careful not to say too much as Koenma traveled down memory lane. Hearing Koenma tell a story from his past was just as rare as the phenomena outside.

"Yep," Koenma continued. "They're like… Oh, I don't know how to explain. Little jolts of electricity almost. But they don't hurt. It's like…"

"Kisses?" Yusuke offered, raising an eyebrow.

Koenma covered his mouth to stifle a laugh as his cheeks burned red. "Perhaps…" He smiled, keeping his head down to avoid Yusuke's gaze. "They're warm like kisses, I suppose. And that warmth just…" he waved his hands, trying to pantomime this impossible feeling. "Fills you up. It's like nothing you've experienced, Yusuke. It's like a hug, a kiss, a caress, but even more than that. It's like… Like…"

He finally lifted his head to meet the other's gaze and their eyes locked. Yusuke didn't want to interrupt this fairy tale about catching stars that felt like kisses. When had he ever heard Koenma reminisce about his childhood? When had Koenma ever been so enchanted by… Well, anything?

With a mischievous grin, Yusuke extended his leg, gently running his ankle along Koenma's calf. A small yelp escaped the godling, and he shoved his hands against his mouth to keep it in.

"It's like that maybe?" Yusuke offered, smugness rolling off of him in waves.

"Now, now!" Botan's voice rang through the small room as she swept through the door, carrying a tray with three mugs and tiny morsels. "Try not to flirt with Koenma too hard, Yusuke. You'll make him nervous."

Yusuke sat up as the rich, sweet smell hit his nose. Childish delight exploded inside of him like fireworks and he dived for them as if they were the most precious treasures in the world. Any flirting with Koenma was forgotten as he attempted to grab one of the treats, only to nearly fall off of the couch as Botan pulled them out of reach.

"Hey! Are those things just for show?" Yusuke yelled only for Botan to set her trey on the table, plop down on the love seat, and give Koenma a knowing look.

Which immediately set off all Yusuke's red flags.

Not one to waste any time, Yusuke didn't give the duo a chance to hold their secret any longer.

"Spit it out. What's going on?"

Koenma bit his lip, looking anywhere other than his former Spirit Detective, face calm, collected, and yet…

Yusuke knew that look on his face. Koenma was a master at keeping secrets, but he couldn't fool Yusuke anymore. The man was hiding something that would ruin this amazing night.

"I'm sorry we lied to you."

Yusuke blinked, unsure of what he'd just heard. "Lie?"

"We just wanted to show you something wonderful," Botan simpered as if she were in trouble. "Something you'd never be able to see in your lifetime."

"There is no mission," Koenma admitted. "We called you here to show you the rain and to celebrate this phenomenon with you. As a thank you for everything you've done for Spirit World and the Mortal Realm. Being a Spirit Detective is a thankless job, Yusuke, and well… This is quite literally the least we can do for you."

The least they could do? Yusuke let those words sink in, let Koenma and Botan's warm smiles settle over him like the stars outside. All these years he's been saving the world, saving lives, and expecting nothing in return. That was the deal, anyway. A second chance at life in exchange for becoming a Spirit Detective. Yet, here they were now, the God of Death and the Grim Reaper, thanking him for everything he'd done. They made sure he could see this marvel, inviting him here for the sole purpose of showing their appreciation.

"Well…" Yusuke was shocked he got the word out without choking up. He closed his eyes, pushing back the tears that wanted to well.

"Let's get this rain viewing party started then!"

"Yes! Lets!" Botan giggled as she handed off the treats. "I put extra chocolate in yours, sir."

"Yay! Thank you, Botan!"

"I don't get extra chocolate in mine?" Yusuke whined.

"Oh shush now. Believe me, it's chocolatey enough for you."

Of course it was. Botan never failed when it came to delicious treats. Whether it was hot chocolate or those strange little bonbons that were covered in coconut and glitter, she always created perfection. Even so, Yusuke couldn't help himself. Nosiness got the better of him and he leaned over to glance inside the sky blue mug in Koenma's hands.

"You have your own, you know…." Koenma's sharp eyes pierced Yusuke, though the former detective didn't register the stab.

"Lemme see!" he whined, practically sitting in Koenma's lap as he curiously peered over the snacks.

"It's just hot chocolate!"

"Here you are, Yusuke." Hoping to save her boss from Yusuke's curious onslaught, Botan handed him a mint green mug filled to the brim with hot cocoa. The rich chocolatey sweetness filled his nose, inviting him to partake in its divine deliciousness. An invitation he happily accepted.

"Hell yeah," he whispered as he brought the cup to his lips, eager for all of that chocolatey warmth to fill him…

Only for Koenma to steal his cup from right under his nose.

"What! Hey!! You're the one telling me to get my own and–"

"Shhhhhh~" Koenma sang as he unlatched the window, the quickness in his actions rivaling that of Hiei.

"Botan, help!"

Cruel, teasing giggles were the reply to his cry for help. Of course they were in on this together. The mean girls of Spirit World, Botan and Koenma, promising sweets and delicious treats only to steal them away and throw them out the window.

"Really, guys?? I stayed here to hang out with you morons and–"

"I said shush." For as often as people told Koenma "no" he wasn't used to anyone disobeying his commands. And Yusuke wasn't used to obeying them, but this time he found himself stopping in his tracks. Rather than fight back he watched as Koenma leaned out the window, extending his arms so the sparkling rain fell directly into the cup. The sight should have been lovely. When has Yusuke ever had the opportunity to catch glimmering stars in his hot chocolate? But all he could think was…

"You're getting that stupid sparkle rain all in my hot chocolate!!"

Koenma ignored him as he filled the cup with sparkles until he was satisfied. "Here we are…" he whispered as leaned back on the couch, handing the mug back to Yusuke. With more aggression than he meant, Yusuke snatched the mug and peered inside. All at once, his annoyance vanished, replaced with a warmth that was all too unfamiliar.

Pastel sparkles twinkled over his drink, winking at him and shining in the dim, cozy light of the small room. They floated delicately, flickering their colors across Yusuke's face like a mini light show. He didn't realize his dazzlement colored his expression, his eyes wide and curious and enchanted.

Koenma and Botan shared a smile at Yusuke's sweet delight. "Drink it," they said, ever in unison.

"Hmm?" Breaking out of his stupor, Yusuke finally glanced up at his two friends, both of whom were watching him expectantly. "What? What do you mean?"

"What do you mean 'what do I mean?' Drink it." Koenma waved him on alongside Botan.

The night was already filled with strange wonder. What difference did it make if he added a bit more strangeness by drinking sparkling stars with his hot chocolate. "Bottoms up…" His voice was hesitant, but he lost none of his courage as he took a big gulp of his drink. Once the liquid touched his lips the sensation of tiny fireworks peppered across his tongue. He thought of pop rocks, only this was more intense, more sublime…

More caramelly.

“They’re delicious.” He took another swig, grinning widely as another wave of popping exploded in his mouth. “Like caramel fireworks!”

“Yes!” Botan leaped up, unable to contain her excitement. “Exactly, exactly!!”

These stars carried even more secrets, more little surprises for Yusuke. He never would have guessed he’d spend his day sipping starlight, yet here he was. He took another sip, letting the stars coat his tongue in their shocking, carmelly goodness. They were oddly smooth going down despite their tiny jolts. Not painful at all, only unique in their taste and design. Warmth traveled down his throat, and he felt as if the stars were spreading through him, filling him with magic that only Spirit World could offer.

“Oh, I’m so glad you like it, Yusuke!” Botan clapped her hands together before reaching for the other snacks. “Here, here! Try these!” She offered him a tray of treats, small little balls covered in what Yusuke recognized as coconut and, of course, glittering stars.

“They’re called Beijino de Coco, a little human treat that we love here in Spirit world.”

“Beijino means little kisses!” Koenma added his two cents. “Isn’t it adorable?”

“And I’ve got all kinds of flavors.” Botan offered up the tray of the tiny round treats. “Taro, mint, banana, and more! Take your pick!”

“Mint! I want mint!” Koenma didn’t hesitate to snatch one up before, popping into his mouth and falling back against the pillows. “Mmmm! Botaaan! You’ve outdone yourself.”

“As I often do, sir.”

Yusuke didn’t care which flavor he got. He grabbed the nearest one to him, delighted as the sparkles shot off like rockets in his mouth, accompanied by whatever flavor he’d wound up with. Every bite of this dessert and every sip of his hot chocolate made his heart beat a little bit faster, made his eyes shine a bit brighter, brought out a joy in him that he hadn’t experienced in ages. Here, in the world of the dead, he felt alive. For the first time in forever, he felt like he’d stepped out of his normal, boring, monotonous routine and was granted the right to experience this magic with the most strange and otherworldly people he knew.

He pinched himself just to make sure it wasn’t a dream.

“It’s so nice to get a break. I can’t remember the last time we got to enjoy the rain like this.” Finally, Botan got her chance to relax right alongside the boys. She filled her own cup with stars, curled into the love seat, and sighed happily as the warmth from that first delicious sip filled her.

“These are delicious, Botan.”

She barely understood him from all the treats he’d stuffed into his mouth. All the better, though. If Yusuke was enjoying himself, then she and Koenma completed their ultimate goal.

“Cheers!” Koenma yelled, thrusting his cup forward. “To Yusuke and the future of Human World.”

“Cheers to that!”

The rest of the night was filled with delight, the gentle stars dripping down the window, twinkling at them as they chatted about everything and nothing. They filled themselves up with Botan’s treats, reminisced about dangerous missions, and promised each other they’d meet up more in the future. Now that their working relationship was done, they all wanted to work on a true, actual friendship.

Hours of fun passed, but Botan eventually found herself the only one awake. To think anyone could sleep during this rare event… Even so, she tucked the two in, smiling at their content little faces. Botan, however, had other plans. Cute as they were, she didn’t have time to sit here and admire their sleeping faces. Not when the rain continued to pour outside, inviting her to enjoy its beauty.

“You boys sleep,” she said, patting each of them on the head before racing away. “I’ve got sparkly puddles to jump in! Sleep tight!”

LUCKY SPIKE
GOODNIGHT SPACE COWBOY

Starship-Phoenix

Like a 90's Sleepover

trigun **vash/wolfwood**

They've barely taken shelter for the evening when the sandstorm rolls over the horizon and slams against the low hills they'd spent the better part of the day traversing.

Worm tunnels offer an excellent shield against bone-stripping sand – provided they're unoccupied by their makers – and luckily this one appeared abandoned when Vash and Wolfwood stumbled, quite literally, into its entrance; tucked in a crevice of rocks at the base of a hill. Easy prey, if the worm had been home, as the two were too busy being burdened by the weight of a hundred pound gun or a hundred years of memories to watch their step.

Or maybe they were too busy arguing over whether or not the oncoming sandstorm – just a soft haze on the horizon, when the bickering started – meant they should turn back for Augusta, and one more night with Lina and Sheryl, or push ahead to Little Jersey, the small city that'd serve as a pitstop before their true destination.

In truth, falling into the worm hole had given them an easy way out. Wolfwood had been hoping, for several iles, that Vash would suggest stopping. He had a feeling, based on the expectant glances Vash kept giving him, that his travel companion was thinking the same. But as neither of them wanted to be the first to suggest it, they'd pushed on for an extra hour, until the storm's efforts to flip the desert upside down became impossible to ignore.

Without the worm tunnel, they would've had to make do with a blanket and some heavy rocks. Now, tucked into the only accessible part of the tunnel, Vash and Wolfwood sit against a wide, banking curve near the surface, caused by the worm avoiding the hard desert stone of the hill in preference of the soft desert sand of the dune.

It's the safest place to be. Just a few steps to either side is certain death. The storm and its hundred-ile winds, or the sharp drop-off into the pit the worm called home.

"I think sand hates me," Vash whines as he tips a small mountain of the stuff out of his boots. "My poor feet have blisters, look!"

Wolfwood leans away from the foot Vash shoved in his face. "You think that's bad? Check out *these* bad boys." He pulls off a sock and lifts his foot so Vash can see the calluses on the underside.

Vash's eyes go wide and he lets out a whistle of appreciation. "Those look hard earned, Wolfwood."

"They were." All that time looking for Vash put a lot of iles under his belt. His blisters have long since grown hard as leather. Wolfwood smirks. "You've gone soft, Vash the Stampede."

Vash droops. "Yeah… I guess so…"

Wolfwood lowers his foot. He keeps forgetting. This isn't the same Vash he knew before. He spent a year living the soft life.

Wolfwood considers the haunted look in Vash's eyes, an echo of the one he sported when he explained the origin of "Eriks."

No, Wolfwood concludes. Not soft. Safe and comfortable, perhaps, but not soft.

The guilt of dragging Vash away from that safe and comfortable life only lasts until Vash starts complaining again.

"I'm hungry, Wolfwood."

"And you think this is my problem because…"

"You're the one who does the cooking, not me!"

Wolfwood gestures to himself. "Do I look like I have magic pockets? Where the hell would I be keeping cooking supplies?" He turns out his pockets as proof. "I don't even have *money*."

Vash narrows his eyes, scrutinizing. "What have you been doing all this time, that you don't have any? I know you wouldn't let yourself get robbed, so why *don't* we have any money? Was it gambling? Giving it to pretty ladies who dump you for a richer man?"

"I've been looking all over this damn planet for *you*, idiot!"

"Oh," Vash says softly. "Sorry."

"And where's this we coming from, huh? Didn't Granny give you any cash?"

Vash pouts. "I'm saving it."

"For…"

"For none of your business, that's what!" Vash sticks out his tongue. "And anyway, I *know* you've got secret compartments in your gun. I'm sure I'm not the only one keeping things hidden away for emergencies." He grins. "I'll show you mine if you show me yours…"

Wolfwood throws up his hands in exasperation. "Fine, we'd better take inventory of what we do have."

* * * * *

It doesn't take more than a few depressing minutes to lay out the entirety of their collective belongings on the cave floor.

One extra pair of socks each. One needle and spool of thread. One canteen, half-empty. One pack of cigarettes, also half empty. One lighter. One box of matches. One cross-shaped machine gun (with a few dozen smaller guns tucked inside). One revolver.

A quite frankly alarming number of bullets.

And most tragic of all: one bedroll, one blanket.

They stare at their sleeping situation in frozen silence. Wolfwood's feet ache. His back aches. His shoulders ache. He's dead on his feet. He wants nothing more than to curl up on top of that bedroll and under that blanket and sleep for the next year.

He stifles a yawn. Watches Vash do the same.

The moment of silence stretches, stretches, stretches–

They lunge at the same time.

What follows is a battle of wills as furious as the sandstorm raging just a few feet away.

Wolfwood tries to wrestle Vash into submission, but it's like he has multiplied in limbs. Vash shoves his feet, his hands, his armpits, his feet again, into Wolfwood's face – Vash smells indescribably *rank*, but Wolfwood isn't about to let that stop him – and in retaliation, Wolfwood sinks his teeth into the meat of Vash's shoulder, his calf, anywhere he can reach. Vash rolls over and reaches for the bedroll. Wolfwood yanks it away from him. He tries to grab the blanket, but Vash twists it around his arm and tugs Wolfwood off his feet.

This continues for several minutes.

And then – Wolfwood isn't sure exactly whose fault it is or how it happens – the bedroll and blanket almost fall into the abyss, saved at the last second when Vash and Wolfwood detangle themselves and grab the corners before they can flutter into the dark.

Outside their cave, the storm has blown past them, taking the heat of their argument with it.

"Truce?" Wolfwood offers, panting.

"I'll take the first watch," Vash concedes.

* * * * *

When Wolfwood wakes up and shakes away the remnants of a far too familiar dream, which involved digging through the rubble of a city fallen to Vash's angel arm, Vash is gone. A stab of panic has him convinced that all of it – finding Vash, rescuing Lina, taking him away from the family he'd built, an entire day trekking across inhospitable desert – was all a desert induced hallucination.

But when he looks to the mouth of the tunnel, there's a dark silhouette blocking half the moonlight.

Vash is looking out into the desert sky, face tilted up towards where the waning fifth moon hangs like the sharp curve of a sickle. The moon's newest crater smiles down at them.

Wolfwood is tempted to ignore Vash, to roll over and close his eyes and go back to sleep and pretend that he doesn't know what Vash is thinking about. But the dream is too fresh in his mind.

Bloody skies. Buildings obliterated. Bodily autonomy stripped away.

He gets up. The blanket slides off his body and he shivers as the cold night air hits him. He rewraps the blanket tight around himself as he pads over to Vash.

Vash's voice is quiet, contemplative, when he breaks the silence. "It's harder to run away from what I've done when the scars make it impossible to forget."

Of course Vash would see it that way. Like the scars – on the moon, on his body – are something he does to himself, as a reminder, and not evidence of what has been done to him.

Wolfwood peels himself from the blanket's warmth and throws it over Vash's head. His hair holds the blanket up so he looks like a spiky ghost, and it's almost enough to get a laugh out of him.

But it means Vash isn't looking at the moon anymore, which means *Wolfwood* doesn't have to watch Vash look at the moon anymore.

"Get some sleep."

Vash pops his face through the blanket. "It's not time to switch yet though."

"That worm ain't comin' back. We both need full nights sleep after the days we've had."

Vash opens his mouth, probably to protest.

"Just take the damn blanket."

Vash closes his mouth. Bites his lip. "Okay. But only if you take the bedroll."

In most circumstances, Wolfwood wishes Vash would be selfish instead of martyring himself for the sake of another person's comfort. But if it means Wolfwood doesn't have to sleep on the ground, maybe he'll suffer Vash's nobility this time.

He lays out the bedroll and watches as Vash tries to find a soft patch of ground to curl up with his blanket. He looks like a dejected puppy.

Wolfwood sighs. "Come here."

It takes a minute to get situated, but eventually, Vash wiggles himself into place at Wolfwood's side. The blanket is only large enough to share if they're close enough to hear each other breathe, but the way the temperature has dropped, Wolfwood can't find it in himself to care. Vash's body heat is a welcome reprieve, even with a few inches of open air between them.

"It's like a sleepover!" Vash says, giddy.

Wolfwood has only ever known of giggly girls having sleepovers. And he doubts girls stink of sweat the way he and Vash do, or fist fight over who gets the larger share of the blanket. "What kind of sleepovers have you had?"

"The normal kind! Probably! Have you never had one? Did you skip childhood entirely and spring into existence fully grown with a nicotine addiction?"

Wolfwood brushes aside the childhood memories that arise like cigarette smoke.

Like cigarette smoke, they cling on anyway.

The weight of a gun in his too small hands. The weight of a dead body dragged across the floor. The weight of sins that are too heavy to burden Vash with.

He searches for something to keep the mood light. "What do you even do at a sleepover, is it not just sleeping?"

"Play games like truth or dare or spin the bottle, I think."

"Wow, what an expert," Wolfwood says, dry as he can.

Vash bumps his body into Wolfwood. Instead of pulling away, he remains pressed against Wolfwood. “Sometimes sleepovers involve sharing your deepest darkest most secret fears and desires, too,” he says softly.

“You got something you want to confess?”

“You are a priest, right?”

“I suppose it *is* my job to hear out the woes of poor saps like you.”

Vash is quiet for a moment. He pulls the blanket up over his head and mumbles something.

When Vash makes no move to reappear, Wolfwood joins him under the covers. It’s as dark as a bottomless worm hole. He can feel Vash’s warm breaths on his skin.

“Wanna try that again?”

“I’m glad it was you,” Vash whispers. “I’m glad it was you who found me.”

As far as confessions go, it's not the worst Wolfwood has heard, but something about Vash's truth cuts into Wolfwood, and he finds his own truth bleeding out to join Vash's.

“I'm glad I found you too.”

He regrets it immediately; Vash’s breath hitches.

“You’d better not be crying, or I’ll take it back.”

Vash sniffles. “I’m not.”

Wolfwood fumbles blindly in the dark until he finds Vash’s face. His thumb brushes against a streak of wetness. Vash freezes.

“Don’t take it back,” he whispers.

Wolfwood sighs. “I won't.”

Even if he *wanted* to take it back, he's not sure he'd be able to.

Wolfwood has only known Vash a short time, but he can already feel things changing inside him in irrevocable ways. Things he thought he'd long since suppressed, repressed, and shoved aside to make room for his duty.

But now… Wolfwood doesn't want to be another in the endless line of humans who hurt or abandoned Vash.

He thought Vash would've run, after the fifth moon incident. Not stay in Augusta.

If only he'd looked harder, he could have found Vash right away. If only he'd looked harder, he could have spared Vash the hurt of being alone in the aftermath, and the extra hurt of gaining a family only to have to walk away from them. A hurt Wolfwood knows too well.

A hurt that will only scar Vash further when Wolfwood inevitably fucks up.

He's screwed. How is he supposed to focus on the mission when the evidence of his own mistakes is just as impossible to run from as Vash's?

Wolfwood rolls over so he doesn't have to face Vash anymore. Even in the pitch dark, he can feel Vash's gaze on him.

“We're using your cash to buy ourselves a ride once we get to Little Jersey, got it?”

“Yeah, probably for the best,” Vash agrees.

He says it lightly, with no indication that Wolfwood's abrupt shift in topic either upset or relieved him.

But Wolfwood feels a tentative hand on his back, feels fingers clench in his jacket, the way someone might cling on to something they're afraid of losing.

Wolfwood doesn’t shrug him off. If there’s anyone he’d trust his back to, it’s Vash.

Lewis

Stay-Up-All-Night-Ice-Tea

crayon shin-chan

0.3 ml glass per serving!

Note: Dear reader, in case you'd like to create multiple servings, it's best to prepare lime juice, sugar sirup, and black tea in advance. Let the fluids chill before mixing them. Multiply the ingredients for a single serving per person attending your party

Ingredients

- **3 lime wedges (prepared)**
- **1 teaspoon of brown sugar**
- **5 ice cubes/crushed ice**
- **20 ml/2 cl sugar sirup***
- **20 ml/2cl lime juice****
- **thai black tea/earl grey tea (to reduce waiting the tea should be prepared in advance.)**
- **peppermint crown/slice of lime**

Equipment

- **cutting board**
- **knife**
- **long spoon/skewer for stirring**
- **muddler/big spoon that fits into the glass to crush the lime wedges**
- **measuring cup**

Recipe

1. Put 3 lime wedges to the bottom of your glass. Crush them until the juices flow out. Add brown sugar.
2. Pour the lime juice and then the syrup over the limes. Briefly stir the mixture..
3. Add either 5 ice cubes into the glass, or fill the glass with crushed ice until the crushed ice fills ¾ of the glass.
4. Fill the rest of the glass with the tea, almost to the brim. Put your long spoon/skewer into the glass until it reaches the bottom.
5. Stir the drink thoroughly, but calmly, to avoid spilling.

Done! But wait, it's a party, isn't it? Unless your guests are really thirsty, stick a crown of mint between the ice, or lay some decorative lime slices atop of the ice. Now the drink is finished.

Cheers!

Notes/Substitutions:

***0.5 ml sugar sirup**

- Put 100g of sugar in a heat-resistant container. Boil 1 Liter of water and pour it over the sugar. Stir the mix with a spoon until sugar dissolves

****Lime juice**

- Lime juice describes an ingredient which is basically sweetened lime juice, available in stores with good selections for juices. If the ingredient is too expensive or unavailable, you can easily create lime juice on your own: Take actual lime or lemon juice and put 3 pinches of cane sugar in it. Stir it with a spoon until the sugar dissolves. Add additional sugar if you like it even sweeter.
- In case you can't find any limes, you can also use lemons. Reduce the amount of lemons and/or lemon juice by ⅓.

- The tea doesn't have to be of high quality or an expensive brand. Keep in mind, we are mixing the ice tea with other strong flavours and sugar. Any Thai Black tea/Earl Grey tea is perfectly fine.

Allergy Warnings:

- Citric juices (lemon or lime)
- Contains sugar!
- Black tea contains Caffeine. Unlike coffee the effect isn't immediate but it will keep you awake at higher rates of consumption. Don't consume too much black tea if your kidney is sensitive to kidney stones, or is generally have a sensitive kidney.
- Caution: The tea should be already brewed, and most importantly have cooled down at the time of preparation!

Do not fill hot tea into a glass, especially not into a cool glass or glass filled with ice cubes!

Do not fill hot tea into any glass that isn't tea glass, otherwise the heat can make glass explode.

YOUR HOROSCOPE

A Star Guide to your Super Slammin Sleepover Scene!

Aquarius

Jan 20- Feb 18

Jonouchi

Gossip and Gab. Idealistic, independent, and aloof, your rad sleepover activity is all about spilling that funky fresh tea with your best crew! Set the scene with MTV's slammin' jams in the background while the besties be crushing on absolute hotties in Teen Vogue. Now's the time to take Seven Minutes in Heaven quizzes on all your favorite Backstreet Boys or YuYu Hakusho heartthrobs!

Activities Unlocked: Truth or Dare, calling crushes, and pillow fights.

Pisces

Feb 19- Mar 20

Sanji

Movies and Mania. Selfless, intuitive, and gullible, your slammin sleepover activity consists of the ultimate classic: vegging out with a movie marathon! Grab your parents' car and make a trip to Blockbuster with your homie! Stock up on plenty of snackage and stay up 'till the crack of dawn watching all the hits!

Activities Unlocked: Kungfu movie-athon, mentos in coke, and "accidentally" renting your first 18+ anime.

Aries

Mar 21- Apr 19

Sakura

Crafty Conjures. Courageous, optimistic and impulsive, your totally wicked sleepover activity is gathering the gang for a lil witchcraft and tarot reading! Light some incense and find a serene place to let your imagination run wild! Use positive affirmations to foresee your future successes or call upon the spirits to play a trick on that bogus teacher from 4th period!

Activities Unlocked: Ouija board, Stiff as a Board, Light as a Feather, DnD.

Taurus

Apr 20- May 20

Luffy

Dancing Diva. Dexterous, loyal, and stubborn, your super crunk sleepover activity is a dance party! Set up the strobe lights and break out the dance pad as your crew gets together for some funky fresh jams! You're competitive and in it to win it, and if you wipe out at least you're doing it with style!

Activities Unlocked: DDR, personalized playlist, karaoke.

Gemini

May 21- Jun 20

Yugi

Ultimate Gamer Goblin. Curious, adaptable, and indecisive, your dope sleepover activity is hittin those retro video games all night long! Dust off the Nintendo for some couch co-op and compete for the title of ultimate fighter or flaunt your platformer prowess. 'So long, gay Bowser!"

Activities Unlocked: Nintendo 64, Sega Saturn, PSI.

Cancer

Jun 21- Jul 22

Sailor Moon

Junk Food Junkies. Tenacious, imaginative, and suspicious, your bangin' sleepover activity is baking and junk food potluck! No party is complete without snacks- whether it's a home recipe, raiding the pantry, or ordering the sloppiest triple cheese pizza you can get your hands on! Supersize it! You and your friends can compete to see who can create and eat the gnarliest recipes!

The Five Essential Food Groups Unlocked: Bagel Bites, Hot fries, Dunkaroos, Poptarts, and Gushers.

YOUR HOROSCOPE

Oh Snap! Hella Dope! 90s Guide!

Leo

Jul 23- Aug 22

Sasuke

Creative Casanova. Passionate, ready to lead, and arrogant, your gucci sleepover activity is a dress-up and makeover party! Get the gurls, bois, and enbies together to flaunt the latest trends and shades. Be the true divas of the night as you set up a runway and snap some pics of the freshest fits!

Activities Unlocked: fashion night, polaroids, scrapbooking.

Virgo

Aug 23- Sept 22

Bakura

Cozy Critters. Diligent, methodical, and critical, your baller sleepover activity is a cozy board game night! You're all about comfort and good vibes so throw together the perfect blanket fort and steam some aromatic tea. You're a master of table top gaming from the old classics to the new indie hits.

Activities Unlocked: Catan, Mouse Trap and Pretty Pretty Princes.

Libra

Sept 23- oct 22

Naruto

Melodic Midnight Master. Generous, sociable and reactionary, your bodacious sleepover activity is night under the stars! Nothing can keep you indoors for long and your sense of adventure is calling you to explore and seek out new wonders! Set off with friends on a midnight hike, outside yoga, or star gazing!

Activities Unlocked: Picnic under the stars, night swim, treehouse fort.

Scorpio

Oct 23- Nov 21

Kaiba

Horror Night Houdinis. Resourceful, determined, and jealous, your super fly sleepover activity is a fright night! Gather your fellow gremlins and ghouls as you to tell scary stories around a campfire, test your courage, and summon the spirits! Don't be wiggin' out as you walk through a cemetery in the dead of night, visit an abandoned building, or film the paranormal.

Activities Unlocked: Blood Mary, seance, cracking open an age-appropriate beverage.

Sagittarius

Nov 11- Dec 21

Sailor Jupiter

Mischievous Monkey. Flexible, humorous, and careless, your phat sleepover activity is a mischief night! Don't get caught sneaking out of the house, as your life has officially become a crazy teen movie. Whether you're pranking your friends, or calling the neighbors to see if their refrigerator is still running, you're ready to create some trouble, and make that double!

Activities Unlocked: Nerf gun battle, nighttime hijinks, dusting off ye ol' phone book.

Capricorn

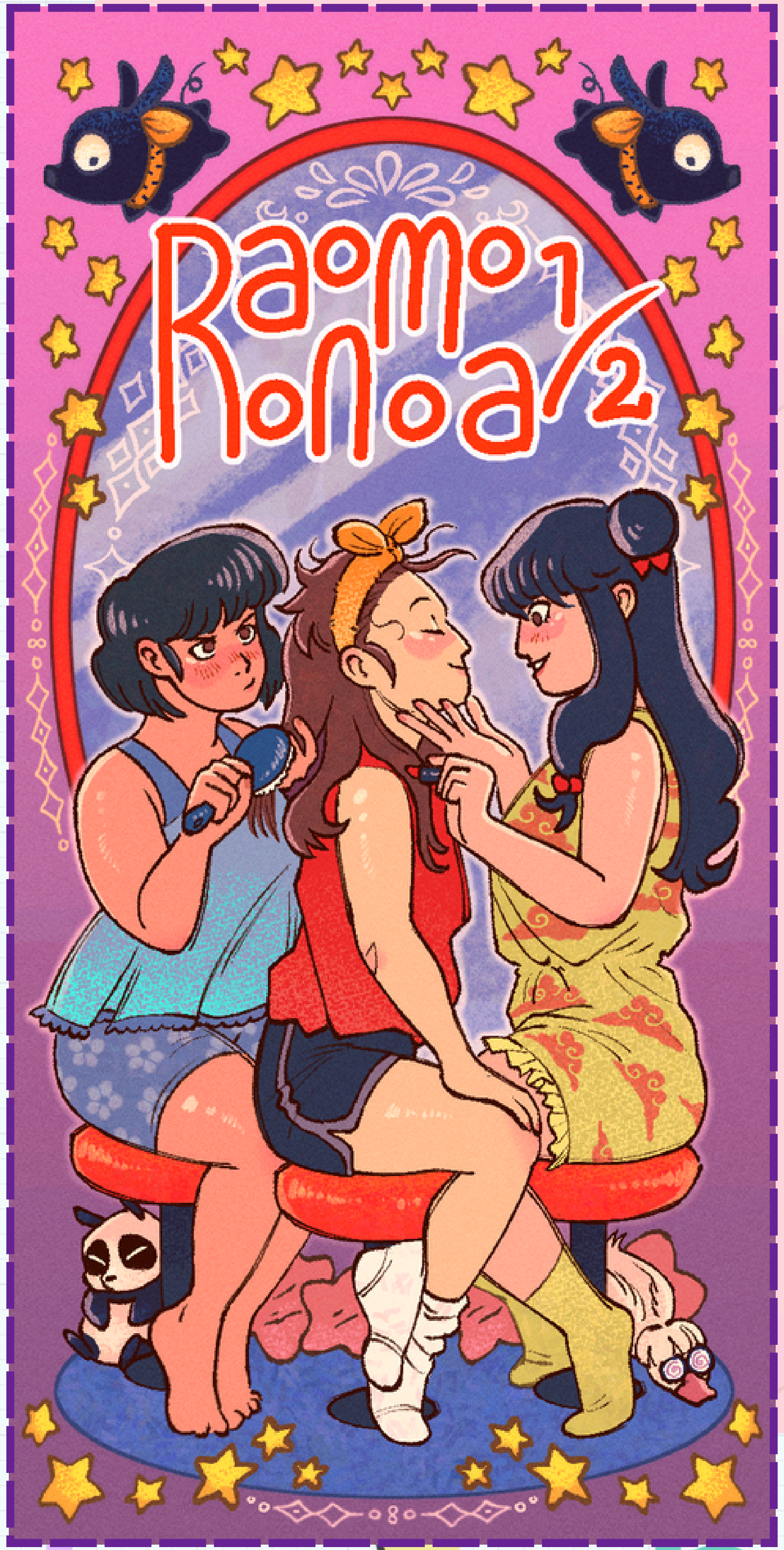
Dec 22- Jan 19

Hinata

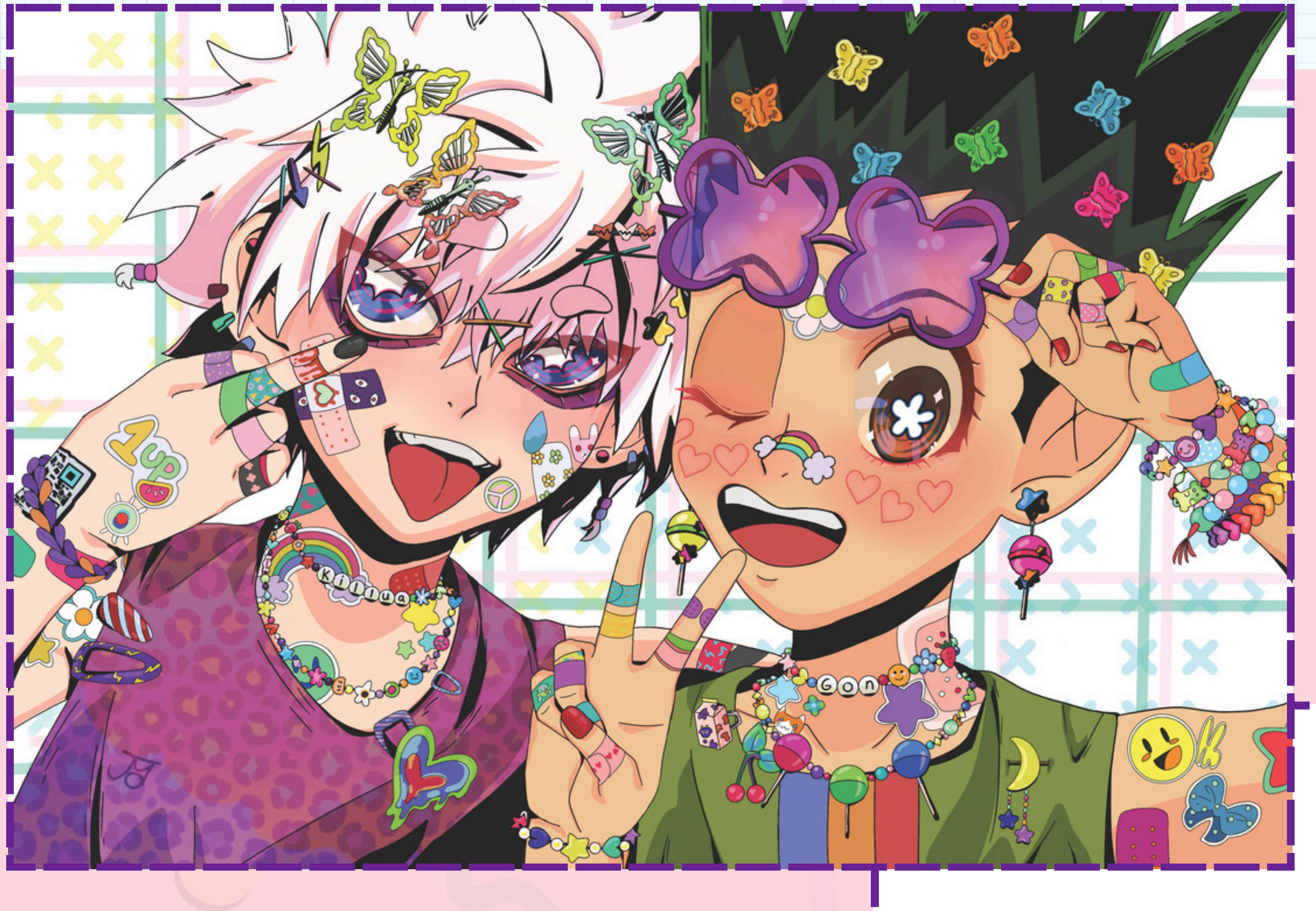
Craft Guru. Responsible, diligent, and condescending. Your totally tight sleepover activity is an arts and crafts night! You love creating and using your hands: drawing, beads, crocheting, paper crafts, the possibilities are endless! Invite the BFFs over to make matching necklaces and cute beaded animal charms that will last forever.

Activities Unlocked: Origami, Shinki-Drinks, fortune tellers, light bright.

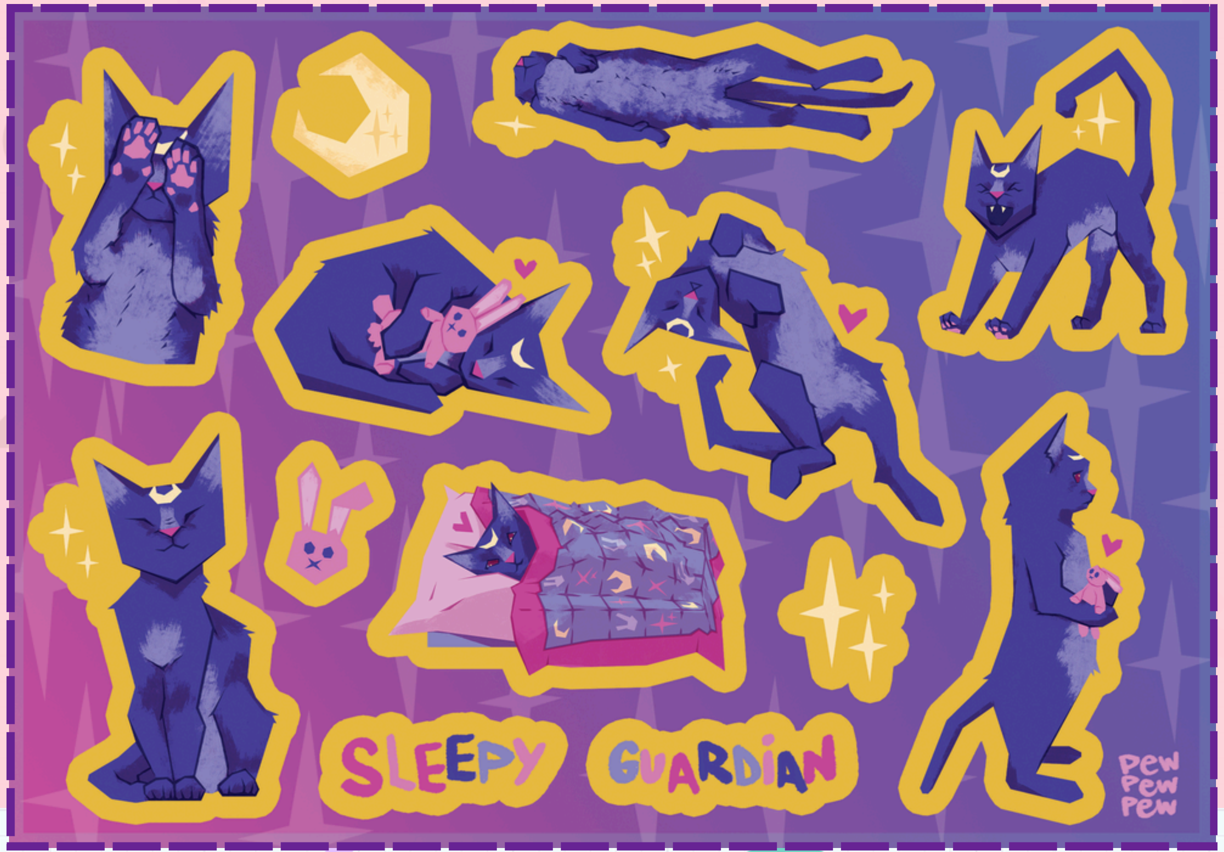
Magnet
ranma 1/2
Roarsh



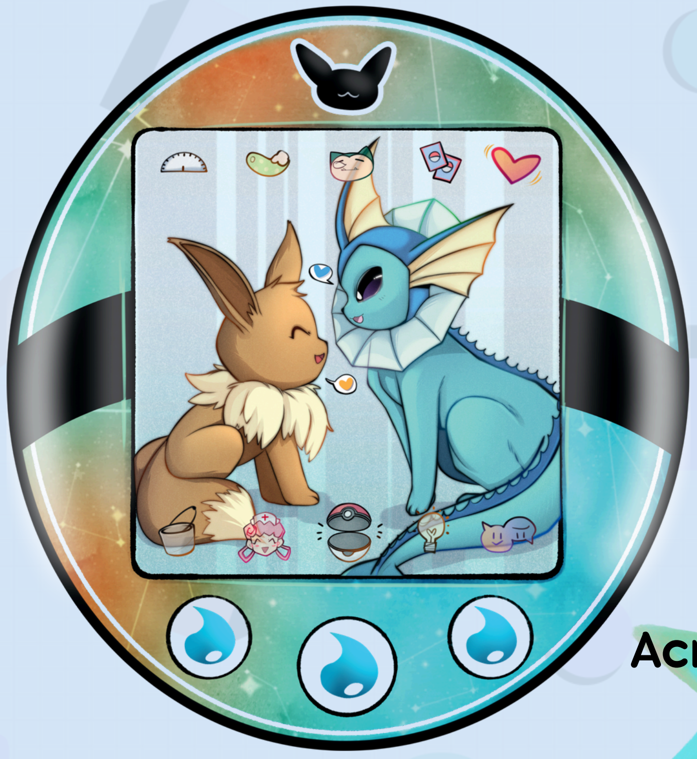
Postcard
hunter X hunter
SoraSattou

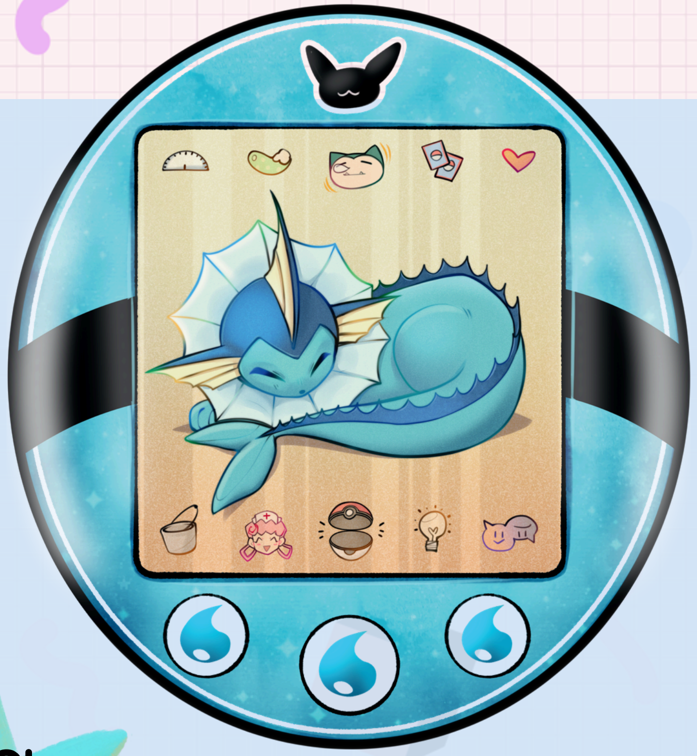


Thinking of You

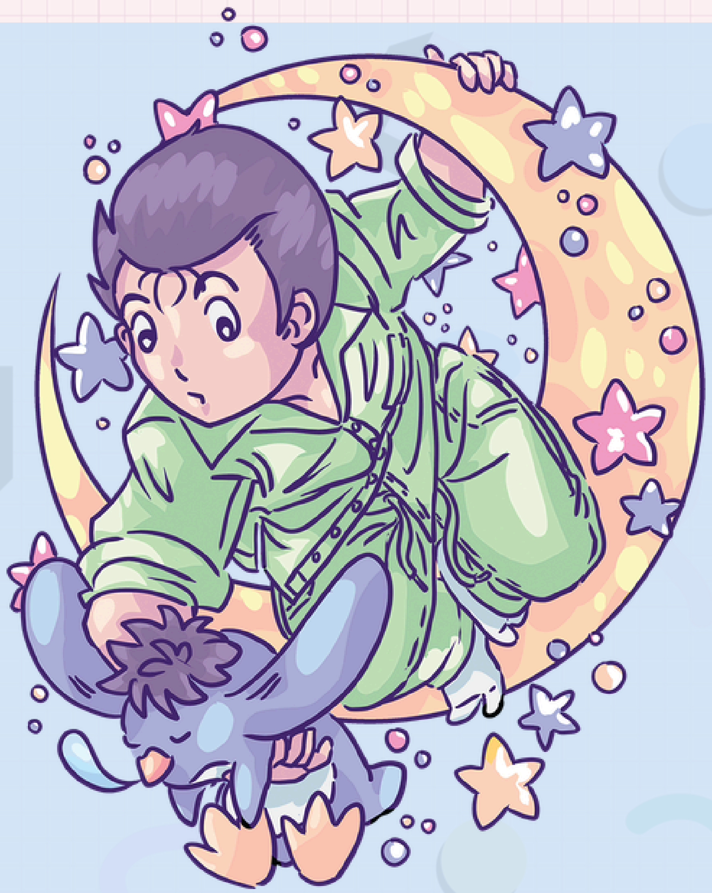

SLEEPY GUARDIAN
Pew Pew Pew

Sticker Sheet
sailor moon
pewpewpew

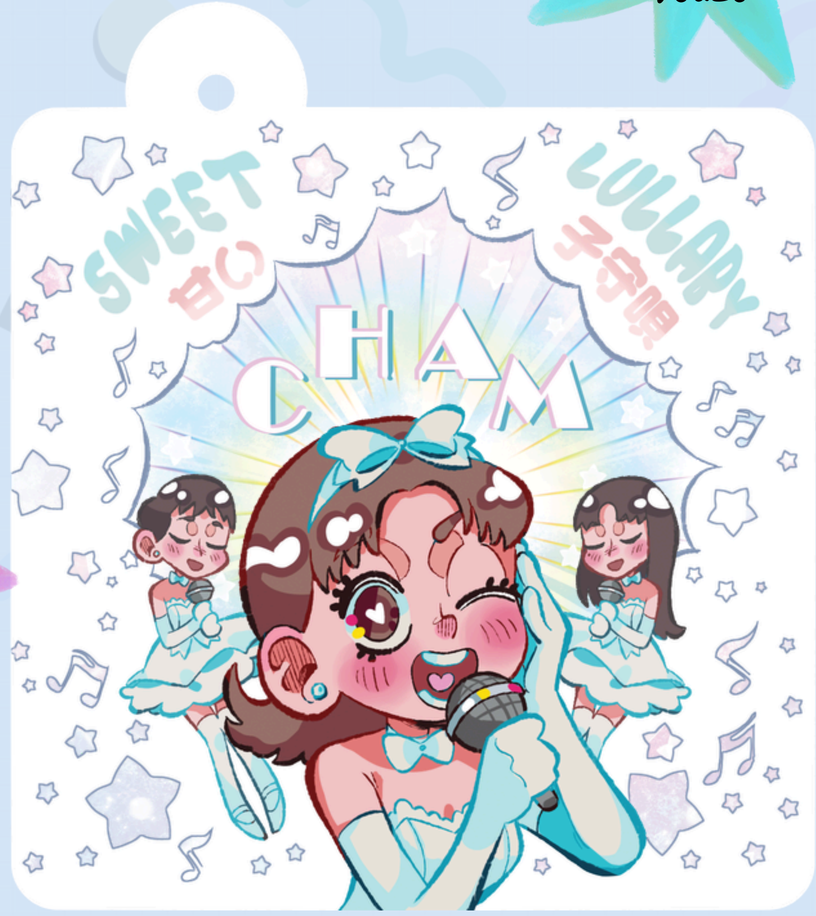




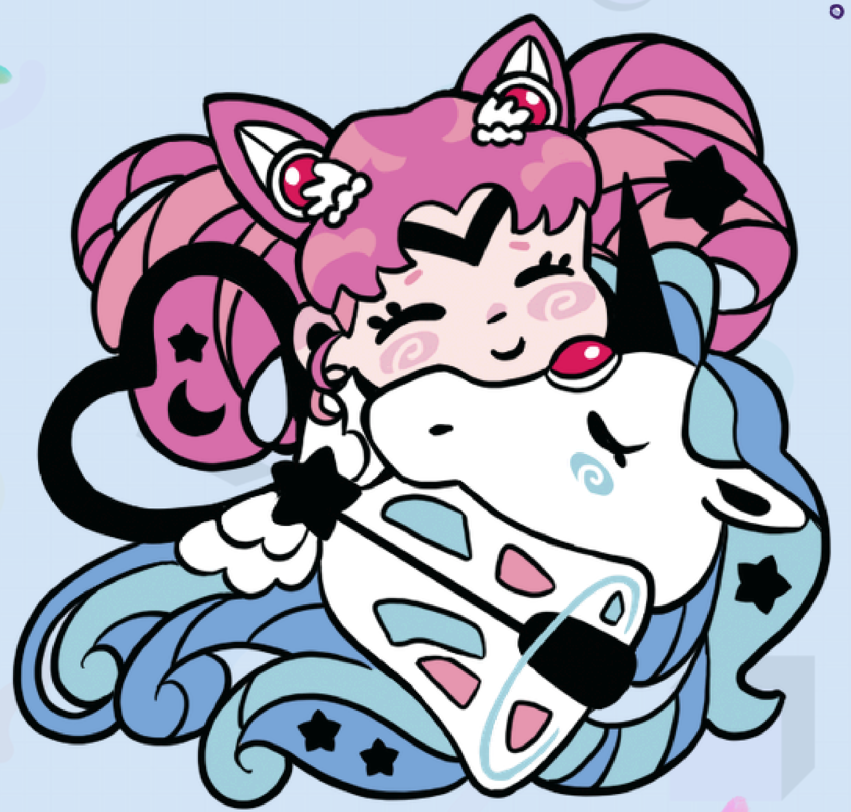
Acrylic Charm
pokémon
Yodzo



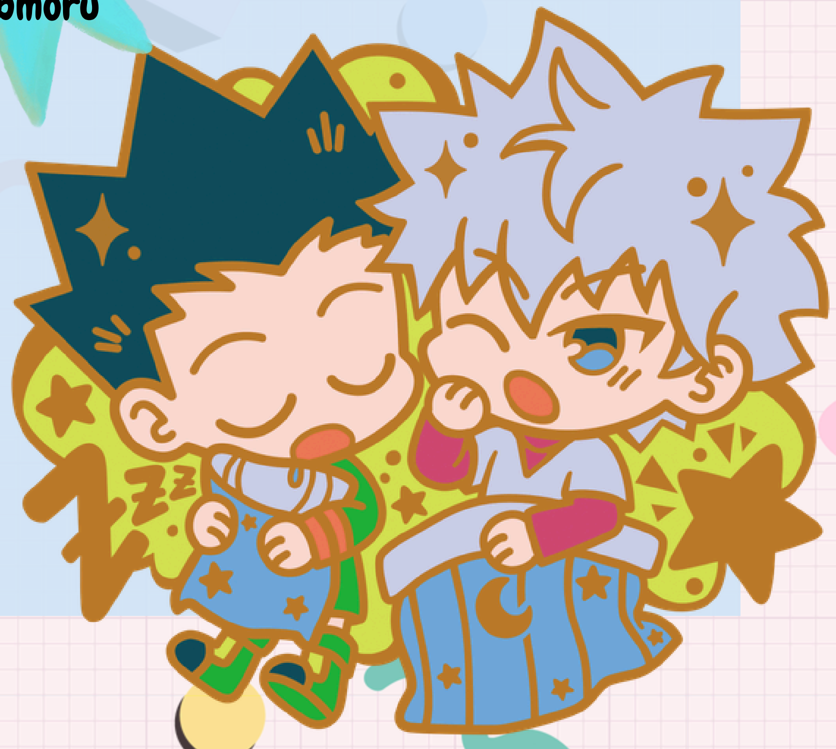
Acrylic Charm
yuyu hakusho
Egg


SWEET
甘い
LULLABY
子守唄
CHAM

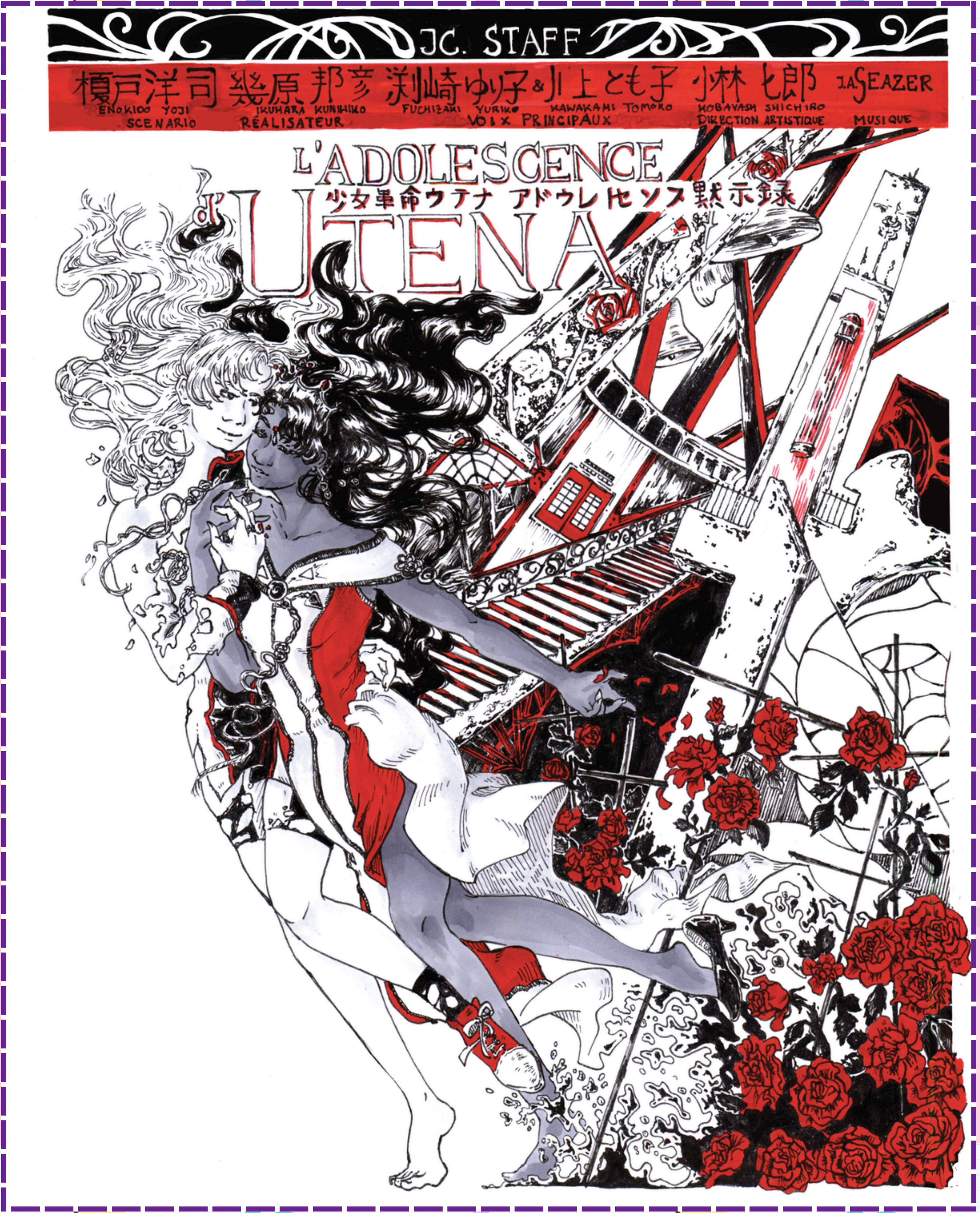
CD Charm
perfect blue
Fala



Enamel Pin
sailor moon
Fala



Enamel Pin
hunter x hunter
Pibmoru


JC. STAFF
榎戸洋司
ENOKIDO YOJI
SCENARIO
幾原邦彦
IKUHARA KUNIHIKO
RÉALISATEUR
渕崎ゆり子 & 川上とも子
FUCHIZAKI YURIKO
KAWAKAMI TOMOKO
VOIX PRINCIPAUX
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DIRECTION ARTISTIQUE
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L'ADOLESCENCE d'UTENA
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revolutionary girl utena

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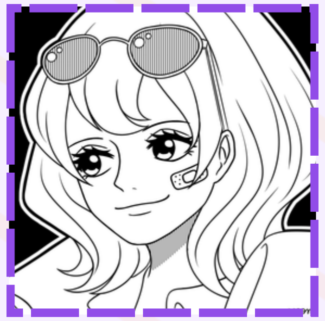

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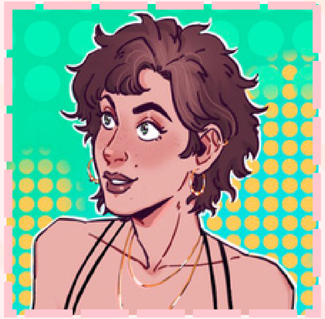

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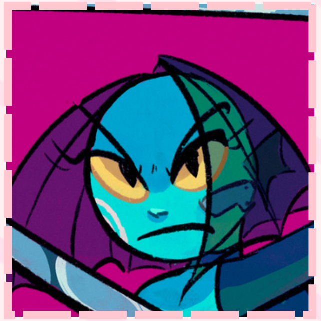

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ART WON'T SAVE THE WORLD

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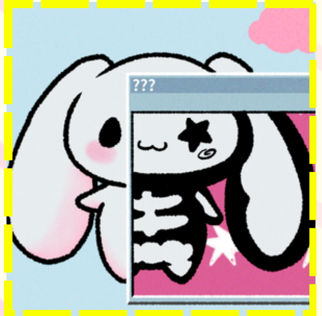

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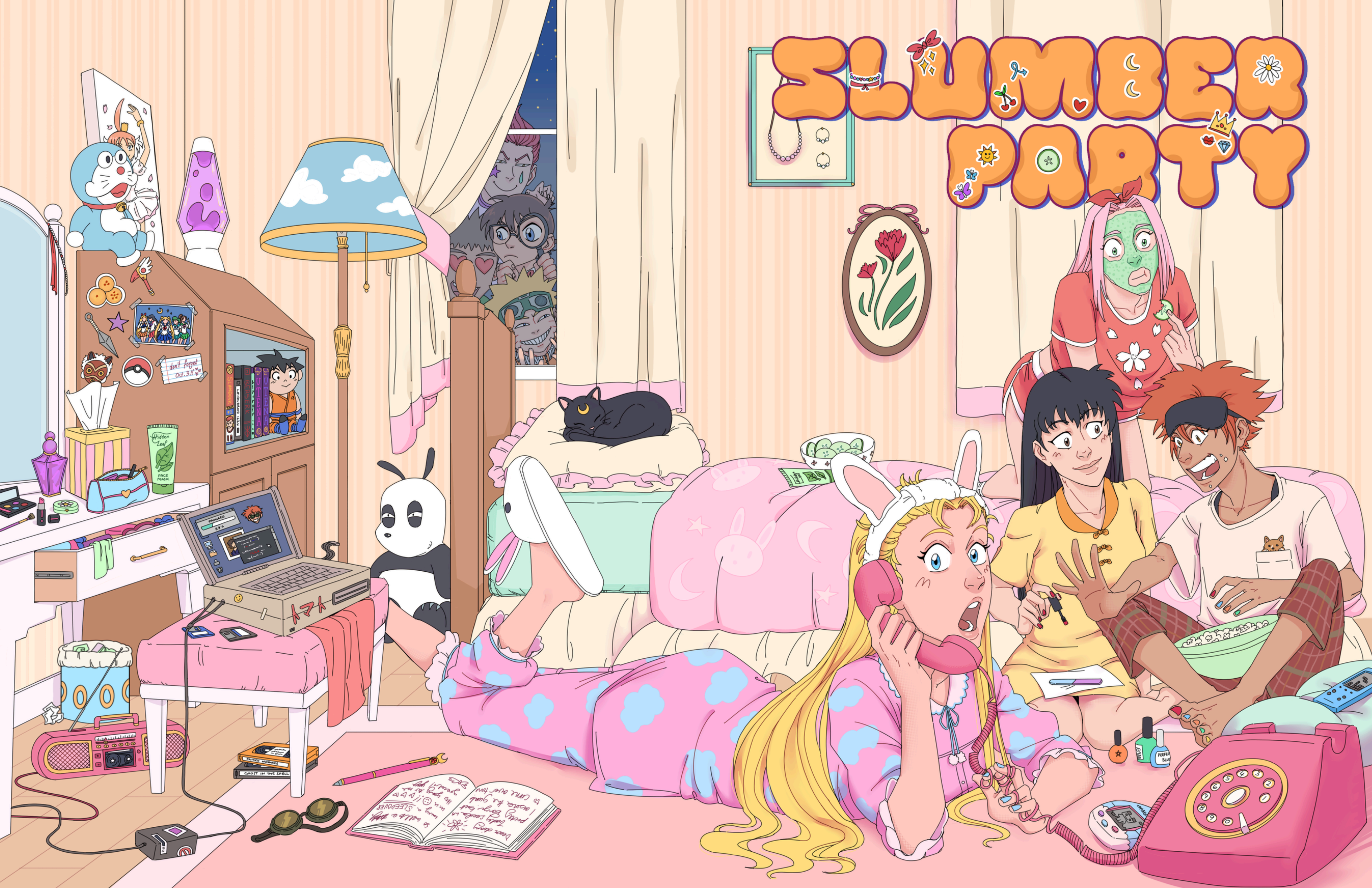
Thank you!!!


SLUMBER PARTY
don't forget Oct. 3!!
SLAMDUNK
#2
Hidden Leaf
FACE MASK
PROGRESS
23%
トマト
PRINCESS MONONOKE
GHOST IN THE SHELL
Dear diary
SLEEPOVER
PERFEC
BLU